Report of Public Hearings & Submissions on the Interim Report

TASK FORCE
ON MUNICIPAL LEGISLATIVE RENEWAL

MUNICIPAL GOVERNANCE
FOR SASKATCHEWAN
IN THE 21ST CENTURY

100-05319/

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PREFACE

Nature of Report

- This is a report on the views on municipal renewal expressed by those participating in the Task Force's 'Public Hearings' process, held in the spring of 2000 in southern and central Saskatchewan.

Role of the Task Force

- In producing this report, the Task Force has decided to perform the role of recorder and transmitter of the views expressed by those making submissions either at the Public Hearings, or to the Task Force office.
- The Task Force believes that those who made submissions want their views and key messages transmitted to the Minister and the government in a clear and concise manner.
- The Task Force sincerely hopes that this report meets those expectations.

Key Revelations in Report

- The report reveals what those making submissions said on at least three core issues. As a result:

1. The Need for Municipal Renewal

- **There are different views on the need for renewal among those participating in the public hearings.**

2. The Nature & Degree of Municipal Renewal

- **There are different views on the nature and degree of renewal among those making submissions.**

3. The Approach to Renewal

- **There is very strong opposition to 'forced amalgamation' among those making submissions.**
- **There are different views among those making submissions on the precise approach or approaches that should be used to foster and facilitate municipal renewal (e.g., pilot projects, eliminating disincentives, introducing incentives, etc.).**

- More precise generalizations on the above core issues and the supporting quotations from various submissions are contained in this report.
- We encourage everyone to read this report very carefully and think about the very good and legitimate points voiced by those who devoted time and energy to participate in a very important exercise regarding not only the future of municipal governance, but the future of the province in the 21st century.

Copies of Report

- Copies of this report can be obtained from our web-site at: **http://www.communilink.sk.ca/municipal_task_force**

Thanks to Those Who Participated

- We sincerely thank everyone who participated in, and assisted us with, this process.

Task Force Members

- Joseph Garcea (Chair)
- Maria Lynn Freeland
- Val Kononoff
- Murray Westby
- Bobby Woods
- Cliff Wright

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Purpose of Report

- The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of views expressed by participants during public consultations, held in the Spring of 2000, regarding municipal renewal in southern and central Saskatchewan.

- The report summarizes the four major types of submissions made to the Task Force:
  - Written Briefs
  - Written Letters
  - Written Petitions
  - Oral Statements

- The principal focus of the report is on the following matters:
  - Views on Need for Municipal Renewal
  - Views on Vision, Goals & Objectives for Municipal Renewal
  - Views on Directions for Municipal Renewal
  - Views on Approaches for Municipal Renewal
  - Views on Other Matters

- This Report should not be confused with the report released in 1999 by the Task Force, titled "Visions and Views From Community Forums," which summarized views expressed by those attending public consultations held in the fall of 1999.

- The Task Force encourages everyone to read both of these reports, as well as other materials that the Task Force has produced to date that are posted on its web-site.

- It is hoped that, collectively, these various reports will help those interested in municipal renewal in making decisions on key issues and options that will benefit their communities and the province as a whole.

2. Format of Report

- The various sections of this report consist of two major parts:
  - The first part consists of generalizations regarding the views expressed in various submissions.
  - The second part consists of quotations from various submissions regarding a particular issue or option.

    Please Note: Quotations are listed in order of submissions presented at hearings followed by quotations from submissions that were not presented at hearings. Quotations from the submissions of SARM, SUMA and the Saskatchewan Party, all of whom presented views at all the hearings, appear first.

- This format has been chosen to maximize the extent to which this report echoes the views expressed in various submissions by using the very words of those preparing and/or presenting the submissions.

- All submissions were reviewed to find quotations making important points regarding the various issues and options addressed in the Interim Report as well as other matters.

- In short, this format has been chosen to echo the important views contained in the submissions to the Task Force in the words of those making submissions.

II. OVERVIEW OF SUBMISSIONS

1. Purpose of Public Hearings

- The purpose of the public hearings was to provide individuals and organizations an opportunity to express their views on the need for and nature of municipal renewal. In particular, the hearings were intended to provide them with an opportunity to express their views on the analysis and proposed directions contained in the Task Force's Interim Report, regarding the need for and nature of municipal renewal.

2. Process of Public Hearings

- 17 public hearings were held in 15 different communities around the province.
- 42 hours were allocated to the hearings.
- The hearings were open to everyone.

3. Participants at Public Hearings

- The hearings were attended by approximately 7,000 people.

4. Presentations at Public Hearings

- Two types of presentations were made at the public hearings: (a) oral presentations of written briefs; and (b) oral statements.

Oral Presentations of Written Briefs

- There were approximately 295 oral presentations of written briefs made at the 17 hearings.
- The average was approximately 18 per hearing.
- The majority of briefs were submitted and presented by municipal officials on behalf of their respective municipalities.
- 193 briefs or 66% were from municipalities.
- Most of the briefs were from individual municipalities.
- The number of briefs from various types municipalities are as follows:

	Individual	Joint	Total
♦ **RMs:**	121	78	199
♦ **Villages:**	6	33	39
♦ **Towns:**	34	13	47
♦ **Cities:**	3	0	3
	164	**124**	**288**

- 29 briefs were submitted jointly by two or more municipalities.
- The approximate breakdown of these briefs are as follows:

	# of Briefs	# of Municipalities
Jointly by Rural Municipalities:	3	10
Jointly by Rural & Urban Municipalities:	26	114
Jointly by Urban Municipalities:	**0**	**0**
	29	**124**

Oral Statements

- At the hearings individuals and organizations were given the opportunity to make short oral statements regarding municipal renewal.
- Approximately 62 oral statements were made for an average of approximately 4 per hearing.

5. Overview of Other Submissions

- In addition to the submissions listed above, the Task Force received a number of other submissions:
  - Approximately 139 submissions (letters, briefs, e-mails) that were not presented at the public hearings; and
  - Approximately 10 sets of petitions signed by approximately 1800 people expressing opposition to forced amalgamation.

III. VIEWS ON THE NEED FOR MUNICIPAL RENEWAL

- The submissions provide important, interesting and diverse perspectives on the need for municipal renewal.

1. No Need For Any Renewal

- Some submissions, but by no means a majority of them, indicate either explicitly or implicitly that there is absolutely no need for any renewal to the municipal system or to any particular elements of the municipal system identified in the Interim Report (i.e., Municipal Purpose, Municipal Status, Municipal Powers, Municipal Functions, Municipal Finances, Municipal Governance and Management, etc.).

Quotes on No Need For Any Renewal

- "The present system…is not broke. It functions well, and should be left alone." – *RM of King George # 256, Outlook, March 27.*
- "Our problems in rural Saskatchewan do not stem from the form of municipal government that we have. Instead we need to take a serious look at what it is that has destroyed our farming economy. If something were done to make farming a profitable activity, then rural Saskatchewan would also be healthy. I think we are studying the wrong thing." – *Village of Rabbit Lake, North Battleford, March 28.*
- "If our local ratepayers are not requesting change to the present municipal system, is change needed." – *RM of Elcapo #154, Windthorst, April 10.*
- "We feel that our current municipal system is providing good governance, good services and sustainable development to ensure a good quality of life for our ratepayers in both rural and urban communities. Why fix it if its not broke?" – *RM of Kingsley #124, Windthorst, April 10.*
- "We believe that our current municipal system meets the purpose as set out in your report, providing: good governance, good services, good planning and development…we provide a good quality of life to our ratepayers that is affordable, accountable and equitable." – *RM of Hudson Bay #394, Melfort, April 11*
- "The current system is not the problem. Funding is the main holdback." – *RM of Willow Creek #458, Melfort, April 11.*
- "Most of us feel the present system in place meets the criteria of being cost effective and more socially desirable than anything that has been suggested." – *Tom Weatherald, Regina, April 12.*
- "We like Rural Saskatchewan the way it is, and the ratepayers of Rural Saskatchewan must be content with the present system or they would have complained about it by now." – *RM of Viscount #341, Saskatoon, April 13.*

2. No Need For Structural Renewal

- The common position among submissions opposing renewal is that there is no need for structural renewal (i.e., consolidation or amalgamation of municipal units).

Quotes on No Need For Structural Renewal

- "We are in total disagreement with the focus of your Interim Report which recommends major restructuring, consolidation and amalgamation of municipal governments." – *RM of Mount Pleasant #2, Weyburn, March 30.*
- "The current structure is not the problem. This arrogant attempt at downloading is the problem." – *RM of Keys #303, Yorkton, April 10.*
- "Changing the structure of municipalities will not change the attitudes of the people; the people will change the structure as their attitudes change. Let amalgamation and change come from the local level; the focus of theTask Force needs to be to empower municipalities...." – *RM of Good Lake #274, Yorkton, April 10.*
- "After a thorough study of the report we have concluded that a major consolidation of the municipal system is not in the best interests of our ratepayers." – *RM of Kinistino #459, Melfort, April 11.*
- "There is no need for forced amalgamation, consolidation or renewal of the structure and/or the boundaries of Saskatchewan municipal governments." – *RM of Buckland #491, Prince Albert, April 11.*
- "Don't eliminate the system, maybe some fine tuning is all it needs." – *Town of Radville, Regina, April 13.*
- "Even if that were true [that larger units wold be cheaper to operate], we still prefer to stay with a system we know works well." – *RM of Viscount, Saskatoon, April 13.*
- "People need a core of stability in the rapidly changing times. When individuals hear that the body of world knowledge doubles every five years, and that everything we have practiced and believed is changing with such a great speed, they need some core of stability. The core of stability in this case is the structure of our municipal governments in Saskatchewan." – *Town of Allan, Saskatoon, April 13.*

3. Virtues of the Current Municipal System

- Many briefs highlight what they see as the virtues of the current system and the virtues of existing municipalities.
- These briefs generally indicate that in light of those virtues, little, if any, change is required to the current system and there is no need to contemplate or undertake any renewal; but particularly structural renewal.
- Indeed, many also expressed concern that if renewal were to be undertaken, especially the type of renewal envisioned in the Task Force's report and especially structural renewal, it will or can compromise various virtues of the current system. In short, the feeling was that renewal is either not needed or that it may prove to be counter-productive.
- Many of the virtues of the municipal system mentioned, intend to refute some of the observations regarding the "problematic features" and the "negative effects of economic and demographic trends" made in Section II of the Interim Report – *The Need for Municipal Renewal.*
- The most frequently-cited virtues include the following:
  - **Efficient & Effective:** Existing municipal governments are the most efficient & effective form of government.
  - **Closest to the People:** Municipal governments, as currently structured, are the form of government that is closest to the people.
  - **Provides Needed Services:** Current municipalities – urban and rural - provide a wide range of services, services that are both needed and wanted by their respective residents.
  - **Immediate Response:** The current system and structure of municipalities provides for almost immediate response to ratepayer requests and needs.
  - **Inter-Municipal Cooperation:** Inter-Municipal cooperation is occurring among municipalities for numerous services, where such cooperation is warranted and where it provides economic or operational benefits.
  - **No Deficit Financing:** Current municipalities operate without any deficit financing or budgeting.
  - **Voluntarism of Councillors:** Municipal governments and elected municipal officials operate largely on a volunteer basis.

Quotes on Virtues of the Current Municipal System

Efficient & Effective

- "Rural municipal government has evolved to be the most effective, efficient and sound form of local government."
  – *RM of Lacadena #228, Kindersley, March 27.*
- "Local governments are the most efficient and accountable form of government." – *Richmound Maintenance Area, Shaunavon, March 29.*
- "Local governments in Saskatchewan are the most effective and efficient form of government in existence today as exhibited by their financial statements."
  – *RM of Hart Butte. et. al., Assiniboia, March 30.*
- "Each municipality is different in serving their ratepayers, they know best how to operate efficiently and cost effectively."
  – *RM of Kingsley, Windthorst, April 10.*
- "You can't get more effective and efficient government than that provided by local rural municipalities and town councils, especially compared ro provincial and federal levels." – *Town of Rose Valley, Melfort, April 11.*
- "We feel that the local governments in Saskatchewan are the most effective and efficient form of government in existence today as indicated by our financial statements." – *Town of Cupar, Wynyard, April 14.*

Government Closest to the People

- "Present councils live in the communities they represent. They know their neighbours and understand the problems facing rural Saskatchewan." – *RM of Victory #226 & Village of Beechy, Outlook, March 27.*
- "Presently our ratepayers know who to contact if they have concerns, problems or information to share. They know their local council, but ask them who is their health district representative." – *RM of Oakdale, Kindersley, March 27.*
- "Local government is the last form of government that is still in touch with the people, is still held accountable by the people, and listens to the people." – *RM of The Gap #39, Village of Ceylon, Weyburn, March 30.*
- "Council members are held accountable at the next election for their actions, but on a daily basis, they face the citizens every time they walk down the street." – *Town of Allan, Saskatoon, April 13.*

Provides Needed Services

- "A strength of local government is that it provides for the local communities to make decisions tailored to their own needs rather than to the standard set somewhere else." – *RM of Milden #286, Outlook, March 27.*
- "Local people decide what services are best for them, what they can afford and they elect their neighbours to provide these services." – *RM of Lawtonia, Swift Current, March 29.*
- "It is the current level of local government which allows the people of the province, rural and urban, to…receive the provision of services required to maintain their chosen way of life." – *RM of Estevan #5, Weyburn, March 30.*

Immediate Response

- "Grassroots interests are responded to quickly." – *RM of Britannia #502, Maidstone, March 28.*
- "A farmer who needs access down a back road, or a beaver dam or blocked culvert cleaned out, may make a local telephone call to their administrative centre. The response is timely and effective." – *RM of Bengough #40, Assiniboia, March 30.*
- "When I phone a councilor of the RM I actually talk to the person I want to, and they often do things for me without me even having to phone them because they find out from other people." – *Garth Herman, Regina, April 13.*
- "People know if they have an issue, it will be addressed under the current system. It may not be resolved in their favor, but it will be resolved promptly." – *RM of Prairie Rose #309, Wynyard, April 14.*

Inter-Municipal Cooperation

- "We have taken advantage of any opportunity to provide needed services with our neighbours when there has been a mutual economic or financial advantage in doing so." – *Town of Eston, Kindersley, March 27.*
- "Urban and rural Saskatchewan are already cooperating on numerous levels…while urban centres are perceived to be the spearhead for social and economic movement, rural municipalities are playing a major supportive role as well." – *RM of Fertile Valley #285, Outlook, March 27.*
- "We are already working with other municipalities in areas like protective services, waste management and transportion…." – *RM of Lost River #313, Saskatoon, April 13.*

No Deficit Financing

- "We have never run a deficit…we have not raised taxes in six years." – *Town of Lashburn, Maidstone, March 28.*
- "Rural governments do not waste money, we refuse to steal from our neighbours!" – *Dave Ollen, Maidstone, March 28.*
- "Currently municipal governments are not allowed to deficit finance. This ensures thaht municipalities are providing responsible governments and are not creating fiscal burdens for the ratepayers." – *RM of Cupar #218, Regina, April 12.*

Voluntarism of Councillors

- "Most of our civic work is done on an unpaid basis by the mayor and councillors." – *Allan Gifford, Outlook, March 27.*
- "Council members take pride in and have a sense of ownership in our village and so they volunteer a lot of free time to the running of the village." – *Village of Rabbit Lake, North Battleford, March 28.*
- "During emergencies, councillors are available 24 hours a day and much of their work is volunteer. When we are being paid for supervision work, we are usually the lowest paid person on the site." – *RM of Storthoaks #31, Windthorst, April 10.*

4. Need for Renewal

- A substantial number of submissions, indeed a majority of them, indicate either explicitly or implicitly that:
  - There is a need for municipal renewal;
  - There is a need for some change; and/or
  - There are some problems in the current municipal system.

- The major differences among them are in respect to the nature and degree of renewal needed, and the specific elements of the municipal system that requires renewal.

Quotes on Need for Renewal

- "It may be reasonable to conclude that we can improve upon our current system of 850 urban and rural municipalities." – *Saskatchewan Party Brief.*
- "I hope my passion for this issue and my support of local governments are seen as a defence of a good system that needs some upgrading to make it even better. I believe wholesale changes are not necessary." – *Brian Duriez, Outlook, March 27.*
- "If the sole recommendation of your report was to enforce the status quo then a golden chance for renewal would have been lost." – *Town of St. Walburg, Maidstone, March 27.*
- "We are not disputing that Saskatchewan may be due for some government renewal …provincial as well as municipal." – *RM of Douglas #436, North Battleford, March 28.*
- "We emphasize that we are not opposed to some changes to municipal governance." – *Town of Eastend, RM of White Valley #49, Shaunavon, March 29.*
- "I think everyone agrees that there must be change…change is often good…[the Task Force] has passed on a message to us as municipalities, so now please allow us the dignity to make the changes as we see fit." – *Sharon Dickie, Shaunavon, March 29.*
- "There is a need for change. We do not however, agree to the proposed scope of change nor the proposed manner in which change should be implemented." – *RM of Stonehenge, Assiniboia, March 30.*
- "Being opposed to legislated amalgamation does not mean we are opposed to change itself." – *RM of Caledonia, Weyburn, March 30.*
- "No one will argue the point that there is a need for change. We have heard its call… declining economy…frustration over tax issues…inability to deliver some services…." – *RM of Walpole #92, RM of Wawken #93, Town of Wawota, Windthorst, April 10.*
- "There doesn't appear to be much doubt that some radical changes must take place to correct, or at least, alleviate the many problems with the current system." – *Norman McLeod, Yorkton, April 10.*
- "There is a need for Municipal Renewal, however we strongly believe this renewal can take place without the major consolidation of municipal governments…." – *Town & RM of Langenburg #181, Yorkton, April 10.*
- "We agree that the existing municipal system, because of demographic and economic changes since its inception, includes imbalances and inequities, which limit the capacity of municipalities…." – *City of Melfort,Melfort, April 11.*
- "A serious reconsideration of the role and organization of municipal government in Saskatchewan is long overdue." – *James Hockley, Regina, April 12.*
- "The only true disagreements are in the degree to which change is appropriate." – *Mark Thompson, Saskatoon, April 13.*
- "The current system was established at the turn of the century and the current demands and needs and the delivery of these services to the tax payers of today have changed. These changes must be initiated from local governments with the assistance of the provincial government." – *RM of Emerald #277, Wynyard, April 14.*
- "We fear that if dramatic action is not taken, and taken soon, Saskatchewan will be irreversibly damaged." – *North Saskatoon Business Association Brief.*
- "The current situation in Saskatchewan does present some problems for an oil and gas exploration and production company." – *Wascana Energy Brief.*
- "We have a number of concerns, important and minor, that illustrate our difficulties with the existing municipal system." – *Town of Osler.*
- "The quick dismissal of the Task Force Report, and the 'if it ain't broke, don't fix it' attitude that prevails in many municipalities promotes the notion that things are just fine. Things are not fine in rural Saskatchewan." – *Town of Outlook.*

5. Need for Renewal to Non-Structural Elements of the System

- Many submissions addressing the need for renewal agree with the Task Force that there are various non-structural elements of the municipal system that are in need of renewal. For example, this includes:
  - Clarifying and Affirming the Purpose of Municipal Governments
  - Recognizing and Affirming the Status of Municipal Governments
  - Clarifying and Increasing the Powers of Municipal Governments
  - Clarifying and Affirming the Functions of Municipal Governments
  - Increasing and Affirming the Financial Resources of Municipal Governments
  - Clarifying and Streamlining Municipal Legislation

Quotes on Need for Renewal to Non-Structural Elements of the System

- "Yes, renewal is needed, empowerment is needed, a better partnership with the province is needed, defined municipal powers are needed, a stable consistent tax base is needed, less regulations and clearly defined legislation is needed, but forced amalgamation is not needed or desired." – *Town of Eston, Kindersley, March 27.*
- "[The Task Force] should be encouraging the provincial government to halt their interference into local government and stop the erosion of authority."
  – *Dennis Penner, Swift Current, March 29.*
- " Many municipalities (both urban and rural) are having financial difficulties due to various reasons, some being loss of the tax base, population decreases, downloading from the federal and provincial governments, and various others."
  – *Town of Bengough, Assiniboia, March 30.*
- "One of the serious flaws in the current system, is the lack of respect afforded to municipal government."
  – *Village of Wood Mountain, RM of Old Post #43, Assiniboia, March 30.*
- "There is room for change to the key elements of the system. However it is not necessary to implement major renewal to the forms of municipalities."
  – *RM of Grayson,#184, Yorkton, April 10.*
- "We do need some municipal renewal, some renovation, not the whole structure, just some changes and improvements." – *David Sloan, Regina April 12.*
- "Many of the problems we are experiencing in Saskatchewan are also a result of cutbacks and downloading." – *Town of Lanigan, Wynyard, April 14.*
- "Legislative renewal is needed to enable our municipalities to deal with our changing environment, and to empower duly elected members of local government to meet the new challenges in a timely, efficient, and effective manner."
  – *Urban Municipal Administrators Association of Saskatchewan (UMAAS) Brief.*
- "Another concern of our Association is that the jurisdiction and accountability of the various provincial government departments and municipal levels of government is unclear. There is often overlapping, conflicting and even inconsistent jurisdiction and regulations."
  – *Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers (CAPP) Brief.*

6. Need for Structural Renewal

- A substantial number of submissions concede that structural renewal of the municipal system is in order. However, there is a considerable diversity of views on three key matters:
  - The extent to which there is a pressing need for structural renewal;
  - The precise nature (i.e., model) of structural renewal; and
  - The degree of structural renewal (i.e., minor, moderate or major consolidation).

Quotes on Need for Structural Renewal

- "Of course there should be some changes in our municipal structures. Of course some tiny villages with a few score of souls should be taken under the wing of some larger authority…some non-functional rural municipalities should be encouraged to seek out strategic alliances to strengthen their work. But a flat out, heavy handed, forced reduction of 1,000 jurisdictions to 125 would violate every principle that has given life to the rural core of this province." – *Midlakes Community Coalition, Outlook, March 27.*
- "Consolidation is long past overdue..." – *Allan Gifford, Outlook, March 27.*
- "We as a council can see there is room for restructuring…we know some change is needed, but this change must come from the grass roots and be on our own terms." –*RM of Oakdale #320, Kindersley, March 27.*
- "There exists no clear sense of where we want to go as a larger community or how we will get there. Not very positive for quality of life…We do not serve common populations on virtually any initiatives, and as a result a common vision and goals that cross service areas is impossible." – *RM of Rudy #284, Outlook, March 27.*
- "Rural municipalities, apart from a few amalgamations, have remained virtually the same since they were formed while the rural population has continued to decline and the pattern and manner in which rural people seek services has changed dramatically." – *Muriel Conacher, Maidstone, March 28.*
- "Main concerns about the present structure: depopulation and loss of tax base; ever increasing costs of doing business; lack of planning, integration & coordination; uneveness of present services; too many organizational barriers; poor communication processes to inform ratepayers; localized nature and small population base encourages manipulation of councils and nepotism; no ability or resources to directly communicate with the province." – *Cindy Hoppe, North Battleford, March 28.*
- "The reasons I've been for larger RM's for the last 25 years: less petty politics, less offices, less salaries…" – *Warren Iverson, North Battleford, March 28.*
- "There are some positive aspects to amalgamation, but the [Task Force] proposal is on far too large a scale." – *RM of Barrier Valley #397, Melfort, April 11.*
- "But for how much longer can a municipal structure that was established in the early 1900's meet the needs of Saskatchewan citizens? It is only a question of time before more rural communities collapse leaving more rural residents without access to municipal services." – *Canadian Union of Public Employees, Regina, April 12.*
- "The term municipality creates a boundary, and when you have a boundary, people tend to think inside that boundary, rather than what is best for the community, the district, the region and so forth." – *Village of White City, Regina, April 12.*
- "The best argument for consolidation is not the efficiency argument, good as it is, but the effectiveness argument. To do more complex things we need more people with greater skills." – *James Hockley, Regina, April 12.*
- "We are now entering the 21st Century and should look to change. Amalgamation will be part of that change, with us or without us. I think we should be part of that change and not just bury our heads in the sand." – *Robert Carruthers, Saskatoon, April 13.*
- "We believe the current number of RM's and the current municipal structure adversely affects Saskatchewan's competitiveness…." – *Wascana Energy Brief.*
- "We believe our Town is especially hampered by existing inequitable municipal structures. In fact, we can be described as being in a situation of 'chronic inter-municipal spillover'…." – *Town of Osler Brief.*
- "Although there may be some advantages to a certain amount of restructuring, the proposed structural change goes much too far." – *Town of Indian Head Brief.*
- "Some amalgamation is overdue. However, it must be done in a methodical way calculated to produce positive results." – *RM of Monet #257 Brief.*

IV. VIEWS ON VISION, GOALS, & OBJECTIVES OF MUNICIPAL RENEWAL

1. Vision of Municipal Renewal

- The submissions reveal a high degree of consensus on the vision for municipal renewal, as outlined in the Interim Report, regarding each of the following elements of the municipal system.
  - The Importance of Municipal Governments
  - The Purpose of Municipal Governments
  - The Status of Municipal Governments
  - The Powers of Municipal Governments
  - The Functions of Municipal Governments
  - The Finances of Municipal Governments
  - The Forms of Municipal Governments
  - The Governance by Municipal Governments
  - The Management by Municipal Governments
  - The Statutory Framework for Municipal Governments

- Although there is a high degree of consensus on the fundamental principles contained in the vision statement regarding each of those elements of the municipal system, there are some differences of opinion on the nature or degree of renewal that would be required to maximize some of those principles.

- Some indicate that the principles profiled in most parts of that vision statement already embodies the current system and therefore, no renewal is required.

- Some suggest that the current system maximizes most of those principles, and that maximizing others merely requires some limited renewal to some parts of the municipal system (e.g., municipal status and municipal finances).

Quotes on Vision of Municipal Renewal

- "Our vision differs from that of the Task Force only in unit size and emphasis. We emphasize the delivery of governance and services in a fiscally prudent manner irrespective of size."
  – *Town of St. Walburg Taxpayers Background Paper, Maidstone, March 28.*

- "Council believes a Vision Statement for Municipal Government...for the 21st Century should strive to enhance local communities, not destroy them. Council found parts of [the Interim Report's] Vision Statement quite confusing, they know what a local community is...Please explain what a regional or provincial community is...." – *RM of Cana #214, Yorkton, April 10.*

- "We agree that the municipal system of government is very important...It is as important as the provincial and federal levels of government...."
  – *RM of Pense #160, Regina, April 12*

- "[The Vision Statement] is a good statement that captures the essence of what a municipal government should be, however, the statement is equally applicable to a variety of government structures. RM of Corman Park does not support the Task Force model." – *RM of Corman Park #344, Saskatoon, April 13.*

- "The report cannot offer any guarantees that the vision of the Task Force is the correct vision for Saskatchewan. Without these guarantees there is an understandable fear of the unknown...."
  – *Urban Municipal Administrators Association of Saskatchewan (UMAAS) Brief.*

1. IMPORTANCE OF MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENTS

- In the 21st century all municipal governments will be very important in the overall governance, management, and development of Saskatchewan's local, regional and provincial communities and their economies. Their importance in these matters will be comparable to and consonant with that of the provincial government.

2. PURPOSE OF MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENTS

- In the 21st century the fundamental purpose of municipal governments will be to foster the following within their boundaries: good governance; good economic, community, social and cultural development; and a good quality of life.

3. STATUS OF MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENTS

- In the 21st century the status of municipal governments as an order of government will be recognized and affirmed within either the provincial, constitutional or statutory framework, or both.

4. POWERS OF MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENTS

- In the 21st century municipal governments should have the requisite powers to perform their functions and to fulfill their fundamental purpose.

5. FUNCTIONS OF MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENTS

- In the 21st century municipal governments should perform all the functions that contribute to the fulfillment of their purpose, except for those which the local, regional, or provincial public interest requires either a local, regional, or provincial government or authority to perform.

6. FINANCES OF MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENTS

- In the 21st century municipal governments should have adequate, secure, and predictable access to the financial resources needed to perform their functions and fulfill their fundamental purposes.

7. FORMS OF MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENTS

- In the 21st century the forms of municipal governments should balance the benefits provided by relatively large units (e.g., economies of scale in administration and services; the critical masses of people and resources needed for development, etc.), and the benefits provided by relatively small units (e.g., responsive and accessible governance).

8. GOVERNANCE BY MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENTS

- In the 21st century municipal governments should govern according to the fundamental principles of democratic governance.

9. MANAGEMENT BY MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENTS

- In the 21st century municipal governments should manage their programs and assets according to the fundamental principles of sound public management.

10. STATUTORY FRAMEWORK FOR MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENTS

- In the 21st century the statutory framework for municipal governments should be sufficiently clear, concise, and consolidated to make it readily understandable and useable for everyone.

2. Goals of Municipal Renewal

- The public hearings reveal a consensus on both the general and specific goals of municipal renewal outlined in the Interim Report, although some submissions believe the current municipal system already embodies those goals.

General Goals

- The general goals of municipal renewal in the Interim Report include:
  - First, establishing a system that is based on and embodies the principles contained in the vision of municipal governance in the 21st century, as outlined above.
  - Second, establishing a system that will contribute to sustainable, vital, vibrant and viable local, regional and provincial communities and economies in Saskatchewan in the 21st century.
  - Third, establishing a municipal system that fosters and facilitates sustainable:
    - Economic development;
    - Community development;
    - Social development;
    - Cultural development; and
    - Environmental development.
  - Fourth, establishing a municipal system that has the appropriate jurisdictional, functional, financial, structural, and statutory frameworks to perform a central and effective role in the overall governance, management, and development of Saskatchewan's communities and their respective economies. This is a role that should be comparable to and consonant with the role of the provincial government.

Specific Goals

- The specific goals of municipal renewal proposed in the Interim Report include:
  - First, to establish a municipal system in which municipal governments would operate either to provide or to foster and facilitate:
    - Good Municipal Governance and Management
    - Good Municipal Services
    - Good Economic Development
    - Good Community Development (i.e., social, cultural & environmental)
  - Second, to establish a municipal system in which governments would be:
    - Very powerful in terms of jurisdictional authority & autonomy;
    - Very well resourced in terms of financial and human resources; and
    - Very capable in terms of engaging in effective planning and development for their areas.

Quotes on Goals of Municipal Renewal

- "We all want vital, vibrant and viable communities and economies, and a system that promotes and fosters such ideals. We strongly feel that this will never be achieved by standardizing and consolidating municipalities."
  – *Town of St. Walburg Taxpayers Background Paper, Maidstone, March 28.*

- "We believe that our current municipal system meets the purpose as set out in your report, providing: good governance, good services, good planning and development…we provide a good quality of life to our ratepayers that is affordable, accountable and equitable."
  – *RM of Hudson Bay #394, Melfort, April 11.*

- "We also agree that good governance, good services and good development should be the mandate for our municipality. However we take exception to the statement that says the current municipal system is inadequate in ensuring good governance, good services and good development."
  – *RM of Pense, Regina, April 12.*

- "We believe that the goal of this review is to ensure that high quality municipal services are maintained and enhanced for the citizens of this province."
  – *Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), Regina, March 12.*

- "Goal setting encourages a person to set achievable, measurable goals while we are being asked to consider the complete revamping of a working system for the pipe dreams of a theorist." – *Response to the Task Force Interim Report (joint submission of 18 municipalities), Regina, April 12.*

- "If the primary goal of this Task Force was to 'produce a focused and thought provoking document' then it accomplished that goal. We are definitely focused on the value and effectiveness of our current system and we are very provoked by the conclusions of the Task Force and where it thinks we should go." – *RM of Lost River #313, Saskatoon, April 13.*

- "Good governance, good services and good development may be hindered by size; taxation base and the ability to obtain qualified personnel."
  – *Provincial Association of Resort Communities of Saskatchewan (PARCS) Brief.*

- "Municipal renewal must work towards the goal of less bureaucracy, better, more efficient service delivery, greater accountability and lower taxes."
  – *Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB) Brief.*

- "Your thoughts on the needs, visions, goals, directions and approaches for renewal in central and southern Saskatchewan are just that, your thoughts, not the thoughts, needs, vision, goals and directions that the people of Rural Saskatchewan want." – *Charlene Gray Brief.*

- "What is the goal of legislative renewal…the Saskatchewan Party believes that change at the municipal level must be driven by what is in the best interests of the taxpayer. Simply put, that means the delivery of the best possible services and economic development opportunities at the lowest possible cost." – *Saskatchewan Party Brief.*

3. Objectives of Municipal Renewal

- The submissions reveal a consensus on most of the general and specific objectives of municipal renewal outlined in the Interim Report.

General Objectives

- The general objectives of municipal renewal proposed in the Interim Report include:
  - Maximize Capacities in the Municipal System
  - Minimize Problems in the Municipal System
  - Minimize Costs Inside and Outside the Municipal System

- The submissions reveal a high degree of consensus on those general objectives.

Specific Objectives

- The specific objectives of municipal renewal proposed in the Interim Report include:
  - Empowering municipalities
  - Resourcing municipalities
  - Standardizing municipalities
  - Consolidating municipalities

- The submissions reveal a high degree of consensus on the first two of those objectives (i.e. empowering and resourcing municipalities).

- However, relatively few submissions address the objective of 'standardizing municipalities.'

- According to submissions addressing the objective of 'standardizing municipalities,' most indicate that some diversity among types of municipalities is desirable to accommodate the different governance needs of different types of communities.

- In regards to submissions addressing the consolidation of municipalities, the amount of consensus was much lower on the precise degree of consolidation needed to achieve the above vision, goals and objectives. (Views expressing the appropriate degree of consolidation are discussed in more detail in a subsequent section of this report).

Quotes on Objectives of Municipal Renewal

- "The main objective…should be to end up with municipalities that are viable and self-sufficient. By self-sufficient it is meant that there would be a sufficient tax base to provide the services that the residents desired by direct taxation, without the need of government grants."
  – *Norman McLeod, Yorkton, April 10.*

- "The assertion is that the system is 'very diverse and differentiated rather than uniform or standardized", which results in 'incompatibilities, imbalances and inequities'. The recommended cure for these ills is a major consolidation which would make each jurisdiction exactly like every other…This is a contemptible attempt at social engineering…."
  – *RM of South Qu'Appelle #157, Regina, April 12.*

- "If the system of municipal government is renewed, it must be modified in a way that will avoid negative impacts on the ability of industrial operations to maintain and grow their operations in Saskatchewan."
  – *IPSCO, Regina, April 12.*

- "Empowering municipalities, resourcing municipalities… this type of renewal would be welcome, but it does not require massive consolidation to be effective." – *Village of Paradise Hill Brief.*

V. DIRECTIONS FOR MUNICIPAL RENEWAL

1. General Directions for Municipal Renewal

- This section of the report provides a summary of the views contained in submissions regarding proposed directions contained in the Task Force's Interim Report with respect to the following elements of the municipal system:
  - Municipal Purpose
  - Municipal Status
  - Municipal Powers
  - Municipal Functions
  - Municipal Governance & Management
  - Municipal Legislation
  - Municipal Finances
  - Municipal Structures

- The bulk of submissions do not address the proposed directions on most of the above elements of the municipal system.

- Instead, most submissions focus primarily on the 'Approaches to Renewal' and particularly, the issue of so-called 'forced amalgamation.'

- Only some submissions devote attention to the proposed directions for many or all of the elements of the municipal system outlined above.

- In those briefs addressing the proposed directions for renewal, more attention is devoted to proposed directions regarding municipal status, powers and finances, and particularly municipal structures, than any other elements of the municipal system.

- The majority of submissions are either silent or do not oppose the general directions proposed for most, though not all, of the above elements of the municipal system.

- The notable exception is the opposition to the proposed directions for 'Municipal Structures.' As discussed below, a majority of submissions express opposition or concern regarding the proposed number, size and types of municipalities. Some submissions indicate that because of their opposition to the directions for 'Municipal Structures,' they are reluctant to support the directions proposed for any other element of the system.

- There is also notable opposition to the specific directions proposed for:
  - Municipal Finances - regarding removing restrictions on borrowing and operating deficits; and
  - Municipal Governance and Management - regarding changes to municipal elections and the creation of a municipal ombudsperson.

Quotes on General Directions for Municipal Renewal

- "The position of the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities (SARM) is that the report's conclusions are flawed and therefore the recommendations invalid." *–Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities Brief.*
- "There are some recommendations we feel would be beneficial, but the forced amalgamation issue overshadows them…To agree to the overall recommendations of the report, is to commit community suicide and give up everything that this community has spent lifetimes in building…For much good could result if some of the recommendations that we view as positive could be implemented. " – *Town of Eston, Kindersley, March 27.*
- "After reading through your report, the feeling was that this council could not give your report support. There was two good points that we salvaged which were recognizing local government as an order of government and giving us natural person powers." *–RM of Winslow #319. Kindersley, March 27.*
- "The municipality acknowledges that there are positive aspects which have been addressed by the Task Force." – *RM of Brittania #502, Maidstone, March 28.*
- "With some exceptions, my council heartily approves of the recommendations in Part IV, Sections 2-7, many of which have been requested by urban municipalities for years." – *Town of Cut Knife, North Battleford, March 28.*
- "While much of this report is detrimental to rural Saskatchewan, there are some sections which do bear some positive points for municipalities." *– RM of Cut Knife #439, North Battleford, March 28.*
- "Council is pleased to see that certain aspects have been addressed by the Task Force. These matters, if addressed by the Province, will result in positive changes for local governance, taxpayers and all concerned." – *RM of Eldon #471, Maidstone, March 28.*
- "We have tried to identify some of the many flaws in the Task Force Interim Report. We strongly oppose the recommendations presented in it…." *– RM of Excelsior, Swift Current, March 29.*
- "We object to the manner in which the restructuring of governed areas is lumped together with the rewriting and creation of new legislative laws." *– Town of Gull Lake, Swift Current, March 29.*
- "We are in total disagreement with the focus of your Interim Report which recommends major restructuring, consolidation and amalgamation of municipal governments." *– RM of Mount Pleasant #2, Weyburn, March 30.*
- "We have studied the Interim Report and with some exceptions, we agree with many of the recommendations stated in the report." – *Village of Windthorst, Windthorst, April 10.*
- "There is some merit in some of the suggestions contained in this report." *– RM of Willow Creek, Melfort, April 11.*
- "There are a number of observations and recommendations with which we agree and some with which we disagree…." – *City of Melfort, Melfort, April 11.*
- "We would encourage the stakeholders not to lose sight of the many excellent Directions for Renewal in light of the emotional debate centered on legislated amalgamation." *– City of Prince Albert, Prince Albert, April 11.*
- "There are some good things in your report. The section on governance has proposals that we as an organization have wanted and worked for for many years…these proposals are timely and necessary…." – *Village of Montmartre, Regina, April 12.*
- "This report does nothing for rural people, but take away the right to govern themselves on a local level." – *RM of Rosthern #403, Saskatoon, April 13.*
- "The task force report seems only to kill off the human resources in rural Saskatchewan and leaves the natural resources that can be managed like machines. Is that really the direction you intended to lead us?" – *Mary Saunders, Saskatoon, April 13.*
- "We are encouraged and pleased to see that those portions of the report which deal with municipal powers, finances, etc., support the City Mayors Report of October 7, 1999." *– City of Swift Current Brief, City of Estevan Brief.*
- "Council believes the Task Force should revoke its recommendations in its Interim Report…." – *RM of Tullymet #216 Brief.*
- "I do however agree that there is always room for improvement and you have made two points in this report that I agree with. One is that municipalities should be recognized as an order of government and the other is the the Municipal Acts should be clarified and simplified." – *Roxanne and Lance Empey Brief.*

VI. VIEWS ON PROPOSED DIRECTIONS FOR MUNICIPAL PURPOSE

- The Task Force's proposed directions regarding municipal purpose include:
  - The fundamental purpose of all municipal governments should be the same.
  - The fundamental purpose of municipal governments should be recognized explicitly in provincial legislation.
  - The fundamental purpose of municipal governments should be to:
    - Provide good governance and management;
    - Foster economic, community, social, cultural and environmental development; and
    - Ensure good quality of life for members of their communities.

- Generally, those submissions mentioning 'Municipal Purpose' are supportive of the Task Force's proposed directions.

- Some indicate that the fundamental purposes of providing good governance, fostering economic, community, social, cultural and environmental development, and ensuring good quality of life is precisely what the existing municipal system is currently providing; these attributes may be lost in a renewed or restructured municipal system.

- Some submissions reveal that they oppose the fundamental purpose of all municipalities being the same.

- Other submissions indicate that although the general or fundamental purpose of municipalities should be the same, specific purposes or functions should not necessarily be the same.

- Such submissions suggest that different types of municipalities (e.g., urban and rural) as well as different municipalities of the same type (e.g., rural) have different purposes or perform different functions based on the needs and interests of their communities and ratepayers.

Quotes on Municipal Purpose

- "The reason for any municipal government is governance and the responsibility for adequate, effective, cost efficient governance should be mandated." – *Town of St. Walburg, Maidstone, March 28.*
- "In a sense, the fundamental purpose of all municipal governments has been the same, that is to provide services to their ratepayers at the most reasonable cost. But the Task Force wants all types of municipal governments to provide the same services, be it for transportation, economic growth and development, community development. Because of the make-up of every municipality, it is not feasible to expect the provision of the same services." – *RM of Meeting Lake, North Battleford, March 28.*
- "All of the municipalities in Saskatchewan are different; urbans are not the same as rurals, and each rural municipality is different from its neighbour. All have different interests and different focus. " – *RM of Excelsior, Swift Current, March 29.*
- "What needs to be done is to clearly define what roles all municipal government must play…." –*Village of Wood Mountain, RM of Old Post #43, Assiniboia, March 30.*
- "The report indicates that the fundamental purpose of municipal governments should be to provide good governance, foster sustainable development and ensure a good quality of life for their communities. This is precisely what our current municipal system is providing." – *RM of Coalfields #4, Weyburn, March 30; RM of Vanscoy #345 Brief.*
- "We agree that the fundamental purpose of all municipal governments should be the same and that this purpose should be recognized explicitly in provincial legislation." –*Village of Windthorst, Windthorst, April 10.*
- "How do you propose the fundamental purpose of all municipal governments be the same when there exists by demographics, functions, and varying needs, fundamental purposes that are totally different in nature and purpose…it would be very inefficient to have a 'purpose statement' just for the sake of having one, if it is something that is never going to be needed in this municipality." *RM of Fertile Belt #183, Yorkton, April 10.*
- "Any new municipal act should being with a clear statement of the purposes, roles and responsibilities of municipal governments." – *Norman McLeod, Yorkton, April 10.*
- "The positives (in the Report): Municipal Purpose – quality of life, good governance and management." – *RM of Invergordon #430, Melfort, April 11.*
- "Rural government does not have the same mandate as urban, never has and never will." – *RM of Prince Albert #461, Prince Albert, April 11.*
- "We agree with the recommendations of the Task Force that the fundamental purpose …of municipal governments should be recognized in legislation…We also agree with what the Task Force has proposed to be the fundamental purpose of municipal governments." – *Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), Regina, April 12.*
- "An unworkable purpose statement obscures the debate…The statement adopted by the Task Force…with the utmost respect is so broad as to be meaningless; it is the quintessential motherhood statement." – *RM of Aberdeen #373, Saskatoon, April 13.*
- "We agree that the fundamental purpose of rural and urban governments should be recognized explicitly in Provincial legislation. The fundamental purpose of municipal government should be to provide efficient and effective services to the people they represent." – *RM of Morris #312, Saskatoon, April 13.*
- "I believe that even now the fundamental purpose of local government is basically the same, that being to provide services to the local ratepayers. I see no need that the fundamental purpose should be recognized in provincial legislation to any more degree that it is now." – *Bruce Waddell Brief.*
- "Each of our communities has a distinct character. Each community has a different set of views in relation to the type of services which are desired…It is the existence of these inter-community differences that forms one of the primary purposes of having local government." – *RM of Rosedale #283 Brief.*

VII. VIEWS ON PROPOSED DIRECTIONS FOR MUNICIPAL STATUS

- The Task Force's proposed directions regarding municipal status include:
  - The status of all municipal governments should be the same.
  - The status of municipal government as a democratically elected, responsible and accountable 'order of government' should be formally recognized and safeguarded through various statutory and non-statutory mechanisms.
  - The status of municipal government should embody key principles relating to municipal authority and autonomy and the right to exercise municipal powers without undue interference by the provincial governments.
  - For the purposes of safeguarding municipal status, the provincial government should consult and give municipalities prior notice regarding any changes to legislation, regulations, policies and programs that impact municipal government ability to perform their functions.
- Most submissions addressing 'Municipal Status' are generally supportive of the Task Force's proposed directions.
- Some briefs suggest that recognition of municipal status is being presented as a 'trade-off' for restructuring municipalities and others indicate that recognition of municipal status can or should occur without renewal to the forms of municipalities.

Quotes on Municipal Status

- "The membership of SUMA has always affirmed the following principles…formal recognition of municipal government by the Province. The SUMA Board strongly supports making progress on enhancing the status and powers of municipalities." – *Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association (SUMA),Brief.*
- "Our Association has been calling for recognition of municipalities as on Order of Government…." – *Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities (SARM) Brief.*
- "Recognition of municipalities as an order of government will take away the inferior legal status which causes the courts to scrutinize the exercise of local authority more intensely than the exercise of authority by the provincial or federal government. A safeguarded status…will ensure that municipalities will be consulted and given notice prior to changes in legislation or regulations that significantly affect local government." – *RM of Eldon #417, Maidstone, March 28.*
- "We agree that the status of municipal government should be recognized and safeguarded in all facets of provincial-municipal relations." – *RM of Cut Knife #439, North Battleford, March 28.*
- "There are changes that senior levels of government can make now that would assist municipalities in their tasks…They can permanently recognize that municipal government is a level of government democratically elected and refrain from dictatorial harassment and interference." – *Gerard Hoppe, North Battleford, March 28.*
- "Throughout the report, it states that municipal governments should be recognized as an order of government…Rural governments have been saying this for years! Now that the Task Force acknowledges that fact, is this being presented as a trade-off?" – *RM of Excelsior #166, Swift Current, March 29.*
- "Legislation should recognize municipalities as independent, responsible orders of government, accountable to the people." –*RM of Poplar Valley #12, Assiniboia, March 30.*
- "Local governments wish to be recognized by legislation as what many people see them as – government…Local authorities should be recognized as a third level of government." – *Red Coat Road and Rail, Assiniboia, March 30.*
- "We agree that municipal governments in Saskatchewan should be recognized as an 'order of government' because they are a democratically elected, accountable and responsible order of government in Saskatchewan." – *RM of Benson, Weyburn, March 30.*
- "First and of utmost importance is the recognition of municipalities as an order of government…We believe that recognition will ensure that municipalities will have the ability to provide input in a significant way as to how municipalities will be governed and to protect them from outside influences." – *City of Weyburn, Weyburn, March 30.*
- "We strongly agree that the status of Rural Municipal government should be formally recognized as an 'order of government'." – *RM of Coalfields #4, Weyburn, March 30.*
- "Municipalities declared an order of government protected in legislation. This is an admirable idea and something we have asked for numerous times in the past. However, the question must be asked why do we have to be bigger in order to qualify as an order of government." – *Southeast RM Association, Weyburn, March 30*
- "It is encouraging to note that your report acknowledges that municipalities should be recognized as a level of government…." *Town of Broadview, Windthorst, April 10.*
- "Recognition as the order of government closest to the people rather than 'creatures' or administrative arms of the province could be taken a step further…municipal governments perhaps should be considered the first level of government – with provincial second and federal third." – *RM of Fertile Belt #183, Yorkton, April 10.*
- "We agree that municipal government should be formally recognized as an order of government. This recognition , however it is done, would specify areas of jurisdiction and govern how provincial and municipal government relate to each other." – *City of Melfort, Melfort, April 11.*
- "We have serious concerns about the proposal that municipal boundaries should be altered prior to any agreement to establish legal recognition of any new municipal districts. New municipal districts should have guaranteed legal recognition of status and clearly known revenue sources prior to any amalgamation." – *Town of Indian Head.Brief.*
- "PARCS supports increasing the status and powers of municipal governments…." – *Provincial Association of Resort Communities of Saskatchewan (PARCS) Brief.*

VIII. VIEWS ON PROPOSED DIRECTIONS FOR MUNICIPAL POWERS

- The Task Force's proposed directions regarding municipal powers include:
  - The powers of all municipalities should be the same.
  - The powers of municipal governments should be clarified and enhanced.
  - The principles of 'natural person powers' and 'spheres of municipal jurisdiction' should be embodied in municipal legislation.
  - Municipal governments should be able to exercise their powers, authority and autonomy within areas of municipal jurisdiction without undue interference by the provincial government except where the provincial public interest requires the following:
    - Provincial regulations, standards and approvals; or
    - Appeals to the provincial government.

- Generally, those submissions addressing 'Municipal Powers' are supportive of the Task Force's proposed directions regarding municipal powers. In particular, they support the clarification and enhancement of municipal powers and the introduction of "natural person powers" – which provide municipalities with the same rights, powers and privileges as any ordinary person without the need for these to be explicitly granted through legislation.

- Although these submissions are generally supportive of the proposed directions on municipal powers, some of them contend that:
  - Empowerment should not be a precursor to any type of 'downloading' by the provincial government to the municipal governments.
  - Empowerment should not compromise other important values and features of municipal governance such as local representation, control, and autonomy.
  - Empowerment and consolidation are not necessarily linked and do not have to go 'hand in hand.'

- Moreover, several submissions mentioning 'Municipal Powers' believe that the current powers of municipalities are adequate and therefore, no change is required.

Quotes on Enhanced & Clarified Municipal Powers

- "Urban governments require greater legislative powers and flexibility to meet their needs.– *Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association (SUMA), Brief.*
- "Empowerment – does this mean creating large regional districts and loading more responsibilities on these municipalities, e.g. secondary highways…Is this empowerment or downloading." – *Town & RM of Craik, Village of Aylesbury, Outlook, March 27.*
- "There must be a clear commitment from government that the new municipalities will have autonomy…." – *Russ McPherson, Outlook, March 27.*
- "Empowerment is needed…defined municipal powers are needed... Consolidation and empowerment are not…linked." – *Town of Eston, Kindersley, March 27.*
- "Please be advised that empowerment can occur without consolidation." – *West Central Municipal Government Committee, Kindersley, March 27.*
- "Legislation should include broader corporate powers, allowing more extensive freedom to enter into contracts and agreements. Legislation should include broad bylaw powers for municipalities with very limited or non-existent approval requirements." – *RM of Poplar Valley #12, Assiniboia, March 30, RM of Eldon #471, Maidstone, March 28.*
- "We welcome the removal of archaic laws and the implementation of new laws which give us real power to deal with the issues we face today." – *Town of Gull Lake, Swift Current, March 29.*
- "Is major consolidation being dangled before our eyes as the price to pay for empowerment? Are local governments and the people of Saskatchewan supposed to be excited to achieve this autonomy, at the loss of grass roots representation and control?" – *RM of Excelsior #166, Swift Current, March 29.*
- "Municipalities require more autonomy in order to meet the demand of the increasingly diverse communities whose citizens expect more from the municipalities than they are legislatively able to provide." – *City of Weyburn, Weyburn, March 30.*
- "We do not believe that consolidation and empowerment go hand in hand…." – *Analysis of Municipal Renewal (joint submission on behalf of 45 municipalities), Assiniboia, Weyburn, March 30.*
- "Rural municipal governments have an adequate amount of power to perform their functions and fulfil their fundamental purpose." – *RM of Cana, Yorkton, April 10.*
- "References to 'increased legislative powers'…lead us to fear that the proposed mega-municipalities would be given new powers of taxation." – *RM of South Qu'Appelle #157, Regina, April 12.*
- "At no time has the RM of Aberdeen heard any suggestion that local government need be more generously empowered to carry out current municipal duties. In truth, municipalities are already well equipped…is 'empowerment' about downloading more provincial duties onto local government?" – *RM of Aberdeen #373, Saskatoon, April 13.*
- "Rural and urban municipalities are governed by their respective legislative Acts… [municipal powers] should remain the same." – *RM of Morris #312, Saskatoon, April 13.*

Quotes on Natural Person Powers

- "Our Association…has encouraged providing municipalities with natural person powers." – *Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities (SARM) Brief.*
- "We commend you for recommending some of our positions in your report, namely…Legislation should give municipalities Natural Person Powers." – *West Central Municipal Government Committee, Kindersley, March 27.*
- "We agree that 'natural person powers' should be embodied in legislation." – *RM of Cut Knife #439, North Battleford, March 28.*
- "Natural Person Powers will provide municipalities with the enhanced powers of authority to carry out activities without having to rely upon permissive and restrictive legislation." – *RM of Eldon #471, Maidstone, March 28.*
- "The Task Force recommends the implementation of natural person powers… Something we have wanted for a long time." – *City of Weyburn, Weyburn, March 30.*
- "Such measures as providing natural person powers and spheres of jurisdiction would be steps in the right direction." – *City of Melfort, Melfort, April 11.*
- "We support the introduction of legislation that would allow municipalities to operate under natural person powers, as Alberta has chosen to do…." – *RM of Sherwood #159, Regina, April 12.*

IX. VIEWS ON PROPOSED DIRECTIONS FOR MUNICIPAL FUNCTIONS

- Views on the Task Force's proposed directions for municipal functions vary according to the particular direction of the Task Force's proposals.

- Most submissions are generally supportive of the following proposed directions regarding municipal functions:
  - Municipal government functions should be clearly outlined in municipal legislation.
  - Municipal governments should be responsible for all of the functions for which they are currently responsible, either on an individual or collective basis.
  - Municipal governments should not be responsible for health, education and welfare.

- However, some submissions vary and are generally less supportive in regards to the following proposed directions:
  - All municipal governments should perform the same functions; and
  - Many of the functions that are now performed on an inter-municipal or provincial-municipal basis should be performed by individual municipal governments, except where the local, regional or provincial public interest requires that they be performed by another local or provincial authority.

- Submissions that are **not supportive** of the above two proposed directions generally indicate that:
  - The functions of all municipalities should not necessarily be the same. Such submissions suggest that different types of municipalities (e.g., urban and rural) as well as different municipalities of the same type (e.g., rural) should have slightly different functions based on the needs and interests of their communities and ratepayers.
  - Individual municipalities should not necessarily perform functions that are currently being performed on an inter-municipal or a provincial-municipal basis.

- Some submissions also suggest that other functions, particularly public libraries, should be non-municipal functions, performed by special regional authorities.

Quotes on Municipalities Performing Same Basic Functions

- "The required level of service in each local government varies and the Task Force has dedicated their report to equalization and equity for all taxpayers, urban and rural throughout the province. Urban, rural and resorts all have varying service requirements." – *RM of Milden #286, Outlook, March 27.*
- "Population, geographic size, jurisdictional authority and functions of municipalities are diverse. Except for the functions of municipalities, all of these are natural consequences of population density …The wisdom of differing requirements in core services for different regions is questionable…All municipal governments should be mandated to provide access to essential services for their residents." – *Town of St. Walburg, Maidstone, March 28.*
- "The Task Force wants all types of municipal governments to provide the same services, be it for transportation, economic growth and development, community development. Because of the make-up of every municipality, it is not feasible to expect the provision of the same services." – *RM of Meeting Lake, North Battleford, March 28.*
- "There are changes that senior levels of government can make that would assist municipalities in their tasks…They can support the right of municipalities to determine for themselves which services they will provide and at what level." – *Gerard Hoppe, North Battleford, March 28.*
- "If sole responsibility is awarded to municipal districts [for these functions], does that mean the Provincial Government entirely downloads all responsibility for these areas of service to municipalities…and to the taxpayers?" – *RM of Excelsior #166, Swift Current, March 29.*
- "We agree that all municipal governments should perform the same basic functions. There may be some specific functions that may be iether 'rural' or 'urban' in nature in which case those municipalities also perform those functions." – *RM of Coalfields #4, Weyburn, March 30, RM of Vanscoy #345 Brief.*
- "Stating that 'all municipal governments should perform the same functions' makes about as much sense as saying all the people who live in Saskatchewan should be university professors. It is precisely the differences between municipalities that makes each one unique and close to the people they serve…." – *RM of Fertile Belt #183, Yorkton, April 10.*
- "We strongly believe there must be a clear definition between the role and function of the City government and the Provincial government…To assist in defining the function of municipal government,we believe simplified legislation must be introduced with prohibitive language rather than permissive." – *City of Prince Albert, Prince Albert, April 11.*
- "We agree that all municipal governments should perform the same functions and that those functions be delineated in legislation. Those core functions listed by the Task Force…are in line with the purpose of municipalities…and encompass the activities that municipalities currently undertake." – *Canadian Union of Public Employees, Regina, April 12.*
- "The Task Force suggests that there was debate among municipal officials about core functions for which some municipalities should be responsible, then states there is agreement among the public that the Task Force core functions are ones for which all municipalities should be responsible…The questions begged could, quite frankly fill a book. Which municipal officials debated which functions? Which members of the public agreed? In what detail?" – *RM of Aberdeen #373, Saskatoon, April12.*
- "I am hopeful that improved local government will be able to provide: appropriate policing, community planning, economic planning, social and cultural services; transportation." – *Bob Middleton, Saskatoon, April 13.*
- "We agree that all municipal governments should perform the same 'basic' functions. There are however some specific functions that may be either 'rural' or 'urban' in nature in which case those municipalities also perform those functions as required." – *RM of Morris #312, Saskatoon, April 13.*
- "CFIB agrees that municipal functions should be outlined in legislation in a way that is clear." – *Canadian Federation of Independent Business Brief.*

Quotes on Health, Education & Welfare Functions

- "Health, Education & Income-based Welfare are not currently municipal functions and the council is very pleased to see the Task Force recommends that they should not be municipal functions." – *RM of Eldon # 417, Maidstone, March 28.*
- "Health, education and income based welfare should not be municipal functions. They are not municipal functions now and they should remain provincial responsibilities." – *RM of Cut Knife #439, North Battleford, March 28.*
- "I do not wish to see legislation restrict municipal authority on these [Health, Education and Welfare] matters. Currently many municipalities put funding towards local nursing homes, hospitals and the recruitment of physicians. They do this because they care about their communities." – *Grace Potter, Shaunavon, March 29.*

Quotes on Economic Development & Planning Functions

- "Urban governments have always had a key role in supporting economic development, but the Board has some serious concerns about whether economic development should become the principle focus of municipal roles instead of a focus on broader service responsibilities." – *Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association (SUMA), Brief.*
- "We believe we can be the engine that drives economic development in rural Saskatchewan. The board feels that the amalgamation that is proposed…will not focus on local economic development." – *West Central REDA, Kindersley, March 27.*
- "All municipalities must be responsible for planning and economic development." – *Town of St. Walburg, Maidstone, March 28.*
- "Economic development efforts should be organized on a voluntary basis by local governments and supported with financial and technical resources from the province." – *Gerard Hoppe, North Battleford, March 28.*
- "Economic development functions should be performed primarily on a regional basis by REDA's to which municipalities may voluntarily join with no mandate to belong." – *RM of Eldon # 417, Maidstone, March 28.*
- "Municipal governments have been forced to take responsibility for environmentally sensitive areas…Provincial land use policies would assist to define and protect valuable resources, environmentally sensitive areas and natural habitats." – *City of Prince Albert, Prince Albert, April 11.*
- "All governments should foster economic development." – *RM of Corman Park #344.*
- "CFIB disagrees that municipal governments should play a key economic development role…Small firms want their municipal governments to focus on fixing the fundamentals such as lowering taxes, reducing the debt, and providing essential services like road repair and protection services." – *Canadian Federation of Independent Business Brief.*

Quotes on Other Functions

- "We believe that the core municipal functions listed in the report should not include ambulance, public health or libraries…." – *RM of Arlington #79, Shaunavon, March 29.*
- "The Southeast Regional Library recommends the Task Force list the province's public library system with education, health and welfare as services that are not the sole responsibility of municipal government." – *Southeast Regional Library, Weyburn, March 30.*
- "Regional libraries are like school divisions and health boards in focus, governance and scale. Including regional libraries in…local municipal governments would fracture the current regional library system." – *Wapiti Regional Library, Prince Albert, April 11.*
- "Autonomous public library boards are the standard mechanism for managing and overseeing public libraries throughout North America….The Saskatchewan Library Trustees Association recommends that the Task Force include public libraries on their list of non-municipal functions." – *Saskatchewan Library Trustees Association, Regina, April 12.*
- "Why were regional libraries not included with education and health as all three have a definite provincial/regional focus?" – *Palliser Regional Library Brief.*
- "Policing in rural areas should remain a federal/provincial responsibility due to the fact that it is federal and provincial law that is being enforced." – *RM of Eldon #471, Maidstone, March 28.*
- "Culture is not specifically defined in the Acts of the Saskatchwan Legislature, although several Acts make reference to it…no Act contemplates the creation of a municipal cultural plan. Within the current framework, however, it is possible to suggest a strategy to emphasize the role of culture in communities." – *SaskCulture Brief.*

X. VIEWS ON PROPOSED DIRECTIONS FOR MUNICIPAL GOVERNANCE & MANAGEMENT

- Submissions that address the Task Force's proposed directions on municipal governance and management contain a range of views regarding changes to municipal elections and the creation of an office of Municipal Ombudsperson.

- There was little mention in submissions regarding the proposals for:
  - Incorporating fundamental principles regarding democratic governance and sound public management into municipal legislation;
  - Conducting elections either on a ward or at-large basis, or a combination of both.

Concurrent Elections For Municipal, Health & Education

Concurrent Elections for Municipal, Health & Education

- There are mixed reactions to the proposal that "municipal elections should coincide with the elections of education boards and health boards."

- Those supporting the proposed direction believe it might save money and improve voter turnout. Those opposing this direction believe that it may confuse the electorate and complicate the voting process.

Changes to Electoral Terms

Changes to Electoral Terms

- Some submissions, by those who operate within rural municipalities, oppose the Interim Report's proposals that: "municipal elections should be conducted every three years" and that "all elected municipal officials should stand for election at the same time (terms should not be staggered)."

- Such submissions express a preference for the continuation of the current practice in rural municipalities for staggered two year terms with elections being held annually for half of the councillors. The rationale commonly provided is that staggered terms facilitate continuity on councils and ongoing accountability to the electorate.

Office of Municipal Ombudsperson

Municipal Ombudsperson

- There are mixed reactions to the proposal for creating a "Municipal Ombudsperson."

- Some submissions indicate support for the creation of such an office because it is deemed useful to provide ratepayers and officials with an impartial body to help them deal with problematic situations.

- Other submissions, however, are opposed to the idea because it is considered to create a bureaucratic unit of limited value.

Quotes on Changes to Municipal Elections & Electoral Terms

- "The idea of having elections at the same time as school boards and health boards would save a considerable amount of money." – *Erhard Poggemiller, Kindersley, March 27.*
- "We would like to know why the fundamental principles regarding local governance should be changed. Why should elections be conducted every three years? Why should all municipal officials stand for election at the same time? Where is the continuity in that principle? And for what reason should municipal elections coincide with the elections of education and health boards – especially when there is no way that the boundaries will ever be the same?" – *RM of Kindersley # 290, Kindersley, March 27.*
- "By keeping elections staggered, there is the guarantee of having experienced and knowledgeable officials on council which provides a continuous sense of direction to local affairs." – *RM of Meeting Lake, North Battleford, March 28.*
- "We disagree with the three year electoral terms. This could result in the entire council being replaced in one year. The incoming council would not have any experience and the result will be increased costs…Municipal elections should be held independently of health and education elections. Combining these will complicate the election process and will result in confusion…about voting procedures and confusion over municipal, education and health issues." – *RM of Arlington #79, Shaunavon, March 29.*
- "We do not believe the people of rural Saskatchewan will be best served with three year electoral terms. Our ratepayers need more opportunity, not less, to choose their elected officials. The Task Force states 'given the incumbency re-election factor, the issue of continuity will not be a problem.' If forced amalgamations occur, it is our contention that when councillors realize the scope of the task they have taken on, their relative inability to effect change and the consequences of spiraling debt, one term will be more than enough." – *Southeast RM Association; RM of Storthoaks #31, Windthorst, April 10.*
- "Another recommendation is that the entire body be elected every three years. You could end up with no continuity in the council at all." – *Doug Thompson, Windthorst, April 10.*
- "Municipal, education and health elections should be done at the same. The three year term is a good suggestion but the electoral terms should be staggered so that continuity is maintained." – *RM of Willow Creek #458, Yorkton, April 10.*
- "Rural municipal governments do govern according to fundamental principles of democratic governance. One of the best examples of this is that Councils governance is affirmed each year by the electorate at election time, which is the best democratic system in place today, not every three years when the climate is right." – *RM of Cana #214, Yorkton, April10.*
- "Elections should be rotated to ensure ongoing awareness…." – *RM of Invergordon #430, Melfort, April 11.*
- "Longer terms could be considered but need to be staggered to preserve continuity of policy and direction." – *RM of Paddockwood #520, Prince Albert, April 11.*
- "We agree that municipal elections should be held every three years in conjunction with school board and health district elections. Holding local elections in alternating years weakens citizen participation and voter turnout." – *Canadian Union of Public Employees, Regina, April 12.*
- "Rural municipal elections should remain as they are now (odd division elections in even years and vice versa). This would assure the continuity of the governance of the municipality, this is extremely important." – *RM of Morris #312, Saskatoon, April 13.*
- "Municipal elections should be conducted every three years and all elected municipal officials should stand for election at the same time. Municipal elections should coincide with elections of education boards and Health boards." – *Provincial Association of Resort Communities of Saskatchewan (PARCS) Brief.*
- "Democracy is better served with regular and healthy rotation of duly elected leadership. While we acknowledge that longstanding leadership in the community is a noble thing and many people are exceptional at it, entrenched leadership (and we've seen it) is definitely not an asset. It is very difficult to unseat a mayor or councilor that has been in office for decades because voter apathy provides an unfair advantage to incumbents. It also discourages young people from actively participating in local politics. We suggest the Task Force recommend there be a limit of three consecutive terms for elected office. We also encourage the Task Force to explore new ways to engage voters…." – *Town of Osler Brief.*

Quotes on Creation of Municipal Ombudsperson Office

- "The [SUMA] Board believes that the proposed role of a Municipal Ombudsperson is not required to achieve legislative renewal."
  – *Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association (SUMA) Brief.*
- "Suggestion has been made for a municipal ombudsperson that would mediate disputes. I believe this could be a good thing."
  – *Erhard Poggemiller, Kindersley, March 27.*
- "And why a 'Municipal Ombudsperson' – just one more person to draw a huge salary?" – *RM of Kindersley # 290, Kindersley, March 27.*
- "We question the need for a Municipal Ombudsperson…The province already has an Ombudsperson who can perform the municipal duties without the costs of creating another expensive position."
  – *Town of Cut Knife, North Battleford, March 28.*
- "We disagree with the creation of the 'Municipal Ombudsperson' office. This would just be another cost to local government. We believe we can access the current Ombuds-man's office if we need this service."
  – *RM of Arlington #79, Shaunavon, March 29.*
- "The creation of an ombudsperson will add more costs."
  – *Town of Eastend, RM of White Valley #49, Shaunavon, March 29.*
- "You talk about creating a municipal ombudsperson office – this is just another glorified job and the taxes have only one way to go and that is up!"
  – *RM of Wellington #97, Weyburn, March 30.*
- "Municipal governments should govern according to fundamental principles of democratic governance and sound public administration which are incorporated into municipal legislation. We do not, however, support the recommendation... in regards to how this governance is maintained (creation of a Municipal Ombudsperson)." – *Village of Windthorst, Windthorst, April 10.*
- "The proposal of the Task Force to establish a Municipal Ombudsperson office is a good idea, regardless of whether amalgamations take place."
  – *Canadian Union of Public Employees, Regina, April 12.*
- "There is no current need for a municipal ombudsman, however the interim report suggests there be a municipal ombudsman. Is the task force suggesting there will be a need for one with municipal reform?"
  – *Town of Allan, Saskatoon, April 13.*
- We do not need a municipal Ombudsman, just another wasted cost."
  – *RM of Morris #312, Saskatoon, April 13.*
- "With the introduction of a municipal ombudsperson, democratically made decisions of the whole council would become questioned by one person who is unfamiliar with the whole situation and its consequences."
  – *RM of Hazel Dell #335, Village of Lintlaw, Wynyard, April 14.*
- "We further note that the Task Force's recommendations include the creation of a Municipal Ombudsperson to mediate disputes between ratepayers and local councils and to make recommendations on regulations, policies and practices. We agree that this may be very practical, but urge that the role of such Ombudsperson be clearly unbiased and objective."
  – *Wascana Energy Brief.*

XI. VIEWS ON PROPOSED DIRECTIONS FOR MUNICIPAL LEGISLATION

- The Task Force's proposed directions for renewal to municipal legislation generally state that "municipal legislation should be consolidated, clarified and simplified."
- The submissions addressing 'Municipal Legislation' are generally in favour of those directions, particularly simplifying and rewriting legislation in plain language.
- The exceptions to this are submissions that suggest *The Rural Municipality Act* should not be consolidated with any other statute in order to maintain the distinction between rural and urban municipalities.
- A few submissions suggest that separate legislation regarding protective services such as fire prevention, emergency planning, building standards, and so on, can be consolidated.

Quotes on Consolidation of Core Municipal Legislation

- "Legislation should be standardized for all municipalities, with the possible exception of the cities." – *West Central Municipal Government Committee, Kindersley, March 27.*
- "Recommendations concerning…legislative acts consolidation, fewer regulations… would all help to maintain and develop our communities." –*Town of Eston, Kindersley, March 27.*
- "Although much of the legislation and regulations should be consolidated, Council remains firm on the position that *The Rural Municipality Act, 1989* should not be consolidated with any other statutes and that there must be a distinction between urban and rural municipalities." – *RM of Eldon #471, Maidstone, March 28.*
- "*The Rural Municipality Act* should remain a separate statute with continued distinction between urban and rural municipalities." – *RM of Brittania #502, Maidstone, March 28.*
- "The idea of separate municipal acts for each major type of municipality is of questionable value…." –*Town of Cut Knife, North Battleford, March 28.*
- "We feel strongly that *The Rural Municipality Act, 1989* should not be consolidated with any other statute and there must be a distinction between urban and rural municipalities." – *RM of Cut Knife #439, North Battleford, March 28.*
- "The different statutes which are available help to guide municipalities in their functions and this has worked just fine." –*RM of Meeting Lake #466, North Battleford, March 28.*
- "Rural & urban municipal statutes could be consolidated and simplified." – *RM of Pittville #169, Village of Hazlet, Swift Current, March 29.*
- "To combine [Urban, Rural & Northern Municipal Acts] into one and provide more autonomy to municipal governments to do the job they have been elected to do without interference…would certainly be an asset." – *City of Weyburn, Weyburn, March 30.*
- "Retention of [*The Rural Municipality Act*] is essential for managing the issues we are facing today and into the future." – *RM of Coalfields, Weyburn, March 30.*
- "We would discourage separate municipal acts for different municipalities. Surely this is a divisive move tending to discourage cooperation." – *Town of Star City, Melfort, April 11.*
- "The core statutes should be consolidated and simplified. These core statutes should be primarily policy frameworks. The present need for ministerial approval, and having so many regulations and statutes, is much too restrictive on the municipal governments of the future." – *Norman McLeod, Yorkton, April 11.*
- "To develop a single piece of legislation that governs all Saskatchewan municipalities makes good sense." – *RM of Sherwood, Regina, April 12.*
- "A single Municipal Act for all resort communities is now required." – *Provincial Association of Resort Communities of Saskatchewan (PARCS) Brief.*
- "I do not think there is a great need to consolidate everything into a single Municipal Act or one Municipal Regulatory Code. The Rural and Urban acts along with other legislation have been amended as needed and required to allow for changing issues." – *Bruce Waddell Brief.*

Quotes on Related Municipal Legislation

- "Protective services legislation such as the *Uniform Building and Accessibility Standards Act, Fire Prevention Act, Emergency Planning Act*, etc. could be consolidated into one statute." – *RM of Eldon #471, Maidstone, March 28; RM of Poplar Valley #12, Assiniboia, March 30.*
- "Protective services legislation could be consolidated into one statute." – *RM of Bengough, Assiniboia, March 30.*
  "*The Rural Municipality Act* should retain election provisions." – *RM of Eldon #471, Maidstone, March 28; RM of Poplar Valley #12, Assiniboia, March 30.*
- "Municipal legislation could not be consolidated into a single Municipal Act because of the glaring differences between municipalities – i.e., what good would the *Line Fence Act* be to an urban municipality, or water and sewer regulations to this rural municipality?" – *RM of Fertile Belt #183, Yorkton, April 10.*
- "We agree with recommendations of the Task Force to consolidate and simplify all provincial statutes that relate to municipal governments…We agree the various prices of legislation need to be consolidated." – *Canadian Union of Public Employees, Regina, April 12.*
- "The current regulatory regime (confusion regarding what legislation actually guides the powers, duties, responsibilities and operation of municipalities,; overlapping, conflicting and inconsistent jurisdiction; and inconsistent wording and lack of harmonization among statutes) has created tiny, distinct regulatory regimes from RM to RM. These problems exist with respect to virtually every piece of legislation that a RM and an oil and gas company are required to interpret." – *Wascana Energy Brief.*

Quotes on Simplification & Clarification of Municipal Legislation

- "Municipal legislation should be rewritten in plain language to maximize clarity and minimize confusion for residents, ratepayers, elected and appointed officials and governments." – *RM of Loreburn #254, Outlook, March 27.*
- "We commend the Task Force for recommending some of our positions in your report, namely…plain language legislation." – *West Central Municipal Government Committee, Kindersley, March 27.*
- "Clarification of municipal legislation will make interpretation of the law easier for the courts and make understanding of the law easier for taxpayers." – *RM of Eldon #471, Maidstone, March 28.*
- "There are positive aspects which have been addressed by the Task Force. These aspects include: municipal legislation being written in plain language." – *RM of Brittania #502, Maidstone, March 28.*
- "*The Rural Municipality Act, 1989*, as it presently stands is quite sufficient and is not difficult to read or understand." –*RM of Meeting Lake #466, North Battleford, March 28.*
- "We agree municipal legislation should be rewritten in plain language to maximize clarity and minimize confusion for ratepayers, elected and appointed officials, governments and the courts." – *RM of Cut Knife #439, North Battleford, March 28; Canadian Federation of Independent Business Brief.*
- "There are changes that senior levels of government can make now that would assist municipalities in their tasks…They can streamline and simplify the legislation under which municipalities operate, i.e., *RM Act* and the *Planning and Development Act*." – *Gerard Hoppe, North Battleford, March 28.*
- "It would be a great step forward if all legislation were written in plain language and that its interpretation was based on the intent of the legislation rather than the letter or wording of the legislation." –*Dennis Penner, Swift Current, March 29.*
- "We agree that municipal legislation should be clarified and simplified." – *RM of Arlington #79, Shaunavon, March 29.*
- "It is our view that legislation should not be written in complex language that can only be deciphered by lawyers but rather in language that is accessible to all citizens." – *Canadian Union of Public Employees, Regina, April 12.*

XII. VIEWS ON PROPOSED DIRECTIONS FOR MUNICIPAL FINANCES

- The submissions addressing the Task Force's proposed directions for 'Municipal Finances' favour some directions, but oppose others.

- Generally, such submissions favour the following:
  - Providing municipal government with adequate, secure, predictable and appropriate access to financial resources.
  - Negotiating ways to reduce pressures on the property tax base created by reliance on it both for municipal and educational purposes.
  - Negotiating tax-sharing and revenue-sharing arrangements.

- However, submissions are mixed in regards to the following:
  - Negotiating the access that municipal governments should have to various other revenue sources.
  - Municipal governments should have extensive taxation tools, such as the power to establish base taxes, variable mill rates, levies, etc.

- Many submissions greatly oppose the following direction:
  - Municipal governments should not be unduly restricted by the provincial government in matters related to:
    - Borrowing Levels
    - Operating Deficits

- Indeed, a vast majority of all submissions mention the issue of 'operating deficits' and 'deficit budgets,' indicating that they do not favour the authorization of municipal governments to incur operational deficits.

- Those providing reasons against authorizing municipal governments to incur operating deficits contend that doing so may result in:
  - Irresponsible financial management by municipal councils; and
  - Downloading of costly functions by the provincial government to municipalities.

Quotes on General Directions Regarding Municipal Finances

- "The membership of SUMA has always affirmed the following principles…Urban governments require expanded fiscal resources to meet the ongoing and growing needs of their communities." – *Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association (SUMA),Brief.*
- "There must be a clear commitment from government that the new municipalities will have autonomy and access to their own tax base" – *Russ McPherson, Outlook, March 27.*
- "A stable consistent tax base is needed...." – *Town of Eston, Kindersley, March 27.*
- "We have major concerns with the financial restructuring that is being proposed as part of this renewal package." – *RM of Excelsior #166, Swift Current, March 29.*
- "Municipalities need predictable, dependable sources of revenue to finance their operations." – *RM of Lawtonia #135, Swift Current, March 29.*
- "In order to provide services to the citizens, the City of Weyburn agrees that access to adequate, predictable and secure financial resources to reduce pressure on property taxes is extremely necessary." – *City of Weyburn, Weyburn, March 30.*
- "It is imperative to broaden the powers of municipal governments in all areas, but especially in the financial area." – *Norman McLeod, Yorkton, April 10.*
- "We agree that municipalities must have adequate and secure funding…we believe there is a connection between responsibility, authority and capacity. To give a municipality the responsibility to do some thing when the municipality does not have the capacity… would be pointless. When we say capacity we mean financial capacity as well as capacity in terms of population…employees…leadership." – *City of Melfort, Melfort April 11.*
- "The system envisioned by the Task Force would still largely be based on property taxes, and that is a recipe for disaster." – *James Hockley, Regina, April 12.*
- "We are encouraged and pleased to see that those portions of the report which deal with municipal powers, finances, etc. support the City Mayors Report…." – *City of Estevan, City of Swift Current.*

Quotes on Reducing Pressure on Property Tax Base

- "Municipalities have always wanted to work with the Provincial Government to negotiate ways to reduce the amount of revenue generated through the property tax base for education tax." – *RM of Meeting Lake, North Battleford, March 28.*
- "The burden of the education portion of property taxation must be lessened by the Government of Saskatchewan." – *RM of Eldon # 417, Maidstone, March 28.*
- "Burden of education tax on property tax should be alleviated." – *RM of Bengough, Assiniboia, March 30.*
- "Reducing or eliminating education tax from the municipal tax base…will allow municipalities more room to provide services to their citizens." – *City of Weyburn.*
- "We are in agreement that the province and municipalities shoulod negotiate ways to reduce the pressures on the property tax base in regards to education." – *RM of Coalfields #4, Weyburn, March 30.*
- "If the province would take up its responsibility to finance education and return funding percentages to historical levels as requested by SARM, we would have all the room we need to finance our work." – *Southeast RM Association, Weyburn, March 30, Windthorst, April 10.*
- "Town council feels that the government should be contributing a larger share in regards to our education system, as done in the past. This would reduce the tax burden on our communities." – *Town of Kamsack, Yorkton, April 10.*
- "We urge this Task Force to be clear about what it means by 'reducing pressures on the property tax base.' In our view the only pressures that need to be addressed are the educational portion of property taxes. The province must restore its share of funding to 60% of the costs of education." – *Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), Regina, April 12.*
- "We believe there should not be any other taxing authority allowed to have access to the [proprty] tax base other than the municipality itself. *The Education Act*, which gives the authority to school divisions to raise funds through the tax base, is no longer acceptable." – *RM of Morris #312, Saskatoon, April 13.*
- "Removing the burden of education from property ownership and placing it on income-earning, where it belongs, will do more to enhance good government than reorganizing boundaries." – *RM of Monet #257 Brief.*

Quotes on Access to Other Revenue Sources and Tax & Revenue Sharing Arrangements

- "In response to increased downloading from senior governments, we have been calling for access to other revenue sources (be they fuel taxes or natural resources royalties." – *Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities (SARM) Brief.*
- "We agree with the Task Force recommendation to explore tax and revenue sharing. We agree that the provincial and municipal governments should share some tax and revenue bases such as: oil and gas royalties, sales taxes, income taxes, fuel taxes and amusement taxes." – *RM of Arlington #79, Shaunavon, March 29.*
- "What we need is for the provincial government to restore adequate financing to local governments." – *Town of Broadview, Windthorst, April 10.*
- "Explore the idea that resource taxes, rural or urban, should belong to all residents of the province; not to the municipality lucky enough to have them in their backyard." – *RM of Prince Albert #461, Prince Albert, April 11.*
- "New sources of revenue are needed to support infrastructure as the property tax base appears inadequate to meet more than annual operating expenditures. There must be recognition that infrastructure of cities serves a population beyond City limits, therefore, a share of revenues presently received by the province form the regional economic output may be appropriate." – *City of Prince Albert, Prince Albert, April 11.*
- "References to 'access to other sources of funding' lead us to fear that the proposed mega-municipalities would be given new powers of taxation. There have been rumours of a 'municipal income tax'…Any new system of taxation…would be a further disincentive for people to live here." – *RM of South QuAppelle #157, Regina, April 12.*
- "Under no circumstances should this Task Force or the provincial government consider empowering or encouraging municipal governments to enter into public-private partnerships as a way of generating 'alternate' sources of revenue." –*Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), Regina, April 12.*
- "Municipalities should be allowed to raise taxes by the same means as both federal and provincial governments….Should the provincial government continue to only allow municipalities to raise taxes solely by property taxes…the work of the Task Force will have been hampered…All this negativity can be overcome by means of developing a sensible revenue sharing program between municipalities and the province." –*Saskatoon Civic Employees Union, Saskatoon, April 13.*
- "CFIB agrees the provincial and municipal governments should negotiate tax-sharing and revenue sharing arrangements…Such a move would certainly reduce the pressure to increase property and business taxes in Saskatchewan." – *Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB) Brief.*

Quotes on Enhanced Taxation Tools

- "While municipal governments are fully capable of managing their financial affairs in a fiscally responsible manner, they do express serious concerns about the potential for further provincial downloading…as a result of the recommended expansion in municipal taxing authority." – *Saskatchewan Party Brief.*
- "Talk of deficit budgets and expanded tax tools make us cringe. We see it as a recipe for disaster." – *RM of King George #256, Outlook, March 27.*
- "Municipalities can be given extensive taxation tools and powers…without the requirement of major consolidation." – *RM of Gull Lake #139, RM of Carmichael #109, RM of Webb #138, Swift Current, March 29.*
- "Municipalities already have sufficient tools for taxation." – *RM of Pittville #169, Village of Hazlet, Swift Current, March 29.*
- "We agree that a variety of tax tools is required to enable a municipality to make appropriate arrangements within the municipality." - *City of Melfort, Melfort, April 11.*
- "There must be more flexibility given through various taxation tools such as base tax and variable mill rates…." – *City of Prince Albert, Prince Albert, April 11.*
- " We are additionally concerned about the ability of RM's to establish variable mill rate factors and minimum taxes that may be applicable to individual classes. This has already been used to perpetrate abuse upon certain industries or ratepayers…We strongly suggest that new legislation clearly establish the paramaters within which the tools may be used such that a single industry (such as the oil and gas industry) cannot be singled out to bear an unfair portion of taxation." – *Wascana Energy Brief.*

Quotes on Enhanced Financial Management Powers Regarding Borrowing Levels & Operating Deficits

- "The SUMA Board cannot support using operating deficits to sustain municipal services." – *Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association (SUMA) Brief.*
- "Under no circumstances will we agree that operating deficits are an advantage to a municipality." – *West Central Municipal Government Committee, Kindersley, March 27.*
- "I would have serious concerns of the recommendation of municipal government not being unduly restricted by the provincial government in matters related to borrowing and deficits. We see the huge deficits that have accumulated in health districts; I can see that happening again." – *Erhard Poggemiller, Kindersley, March 27.*
- "Deficit financing at the municipal level, as recommended in the report, is not an acceptable practice that we would subscribe to given the experience of consolidate hospital districts and the province itself." – *Town of Eston, Kindersley, March 27.*
- "Deficit budgets and long term financing are not a beneficial practice except in some unique circumstances…." – *RM of Battle River #438, North Battleford, March 28.*
- "Do we really need another level of government with the power to deficit finance and the job fulfilled by the Municipal Board requiring municipalities to receive approval before entering into long term financing arrangements has kept the present system of municipal government so financially viable and secure." –*Village of Climax, Village of Bracken, RM of Lone Tree #18, Shaunavon, March 29.*
- "Deficit financing and no imposed borrowing limits…has not served our Country or Province well in the past and we continue to pay for their overspending." – *Grace Potter, Shaunavon, March 29.*
- "Municipal governments should be restricted in their borrowing levels and should not be allowed to have operating deficits." – *RM of Arlington #79, Shaunavon, March 29.*
- "The tax payers of this province can not afford nor do they want another level of government borrowing beyond their means or runing deficits." – *RM of Gull Lake #139, RM of Carmichael #109, RM of Webb #138, Swift Current, March 29.*
- "No level of government should be allowed to deficit budget." – *RM of Bengough, Assiniboia, March 30, Roy Klym, Regina, April 12.*
- "What could possible gained by turning financially sound and responsible local governments into debt ridden burdens to their ratepayers?" – *RM of Estevan #5, Weyburn, March 30.*
- "Deficit financing is not a practice in local government administration and we believe that it never should be." – *RM of Surprise Valley #9, Weyburn, March 30.*
- "The ability to deficit finance is the last thing we need." – *Southeast Rural Municipality Association, Weyburn, March 30, Windthorst April 10.*
- "Municipal governments should have less restrictions on borrowing and use of capital reserves…We strongly disagree, however, with the recommendation that municipal governments be allowed to deficit finance." –*Village of Windthorst, Windthorst, April 10.*
- "The ability to run deficit budgets…is not moving ahead, that is going backwards." – *RM of Calder #241, Yorkton, April 10.*
- "As a ratepayer I would strongly disagree with this [deficit financing] and ask why would we want this?" – *RM of Wallace #243, Yorkton, April 10.*
- "Rural and Urban municipalities do not need the power to borrow indiscriminately providing further avenues for downloading…." – *RM of Canwood #494, Village of Canwood, Village of Debden, Prince Albert, April 11.*
- "Municipalities should continue to practice good financial control…No deficit budgeting allowed and long term debt secured by reserves." – *Thelma Wright, Regina, April 12.*
- "We are very concerned when the report suggests that 'municipal governments should not be unduly restricted by the provincial government in matters related to borrowing levels and operating deficits.' We are concerned that this would lead to unbalanced budgets and accumulated deficits." – *RM of Pense #160, Regina, April 12.*
- "All people of Saskatchewan have the dark cloud of the provincial deficit from the past. Why would [the Task Force] suggest that for the rural municipalities of the future?" – *RM of Lakeview #337, Wynyard, April 14.*
- "We caution relaxing the restriction on operating deficits." – *Town of Lanigan, Wynyard, April 14.*
- "Do not allow local governments power to operate a deficit." – *Gordon Bonkowski.*

XIII. VIEWS ON PROPOSED DIRECTIONS FOR MUNICIPAL STRUCTURES

- This section of the report focuses on submissions expressing views in regards to the Task Force's proposed directions on:
  - The Number of Municipalities;
  - The Size of Municipalities; and
  - The Types of Municipalities.

- A substantial number of submissions devote attention to the Task Force's proposed directions on structural renewal.

- Unfortunately, the bulk of the attention focuses on the general issue of whether there should be any restructuring, rather than either the models of restructuring profiled in the Task Force report or alternative models that were not profiled in that report.

- Nevertheless, numerous submissions contain some important and interesting points or insights on structural issues.

1. Views on Restructuring

No Structural Renewal Needed

- Few submissions oppose any restructuring in principle.
- Some submissions indicate that there is no need for structural renewal, contending that the current system is appropriately structured at this particular point in history.

Structural Renewal is Needed

- Most submissions, including from those who strongly oppose so-called "forced amalgamation," concede that some restructuring might be needed.
- However, they differ on where structural renewal is required and the degree of structural renewal needed.
- The bulk of such submissions indicate that some restructuring might be needed among certain types of municipalities and among municipalities in certain—however, by no means in all—parts of the province.
- Some submissions indicate that enforcement of the current minimum population criteria for urban municipalities are all that is needed.
- Some submissions, however, indicate that the entire system requires structural renewal.
- Some submissions indicate that minor consolidation could, in all likelihood, yield some benefits in service delivery and development.
- The thrust of many briefs regarding the issue of restructuring is that the municipal councils and ratepayers of the municipalities in question are generally in a better position than either the provincial government or any commission to determine both if there is a genuine need for consolidation, and the municipalities that should be consolidated.

Quotes on Restructuring

No Need For Restructuring

- "We are in total disagreement with the focus of your Interim Report which recommends major restructuring, consolidation and amalgamation of municipal governments." – *RM of Mount Pleasant #2, Weyburn, March 30.*
- "The current structure is not the problem." – *RM of Keys #303, Yorkton, April 10.*
- "Changing the structure of municipalities will not change the attitudes of the people; the people will change the structure as their attitudes change. Let amalgamation and change come from the local level...." – *RM of Good Lake #274, Yorkton, April 10.*
- "There is no need for forced amalgamation, consolidation or renewal of the structure and/or the boundaries of Saskatchewan municipal governments." – *RM of Buckland #491, Prince Albert, April 11.*

Need for Some Restructuring

- "Of course some tiny villages with a few score of souls should be taken under the wing of some larger authority...some non-functional rural municipalities should be encouraged to seek out strategic alliances to strengthen their work. But a flat out, heavy handed, forced reduction of 1,000 jurisdictions to 125 would violate every principle that has given life to the rural core of this province." – *Midlakes Community Coalition, Outlook, March 27.*
- "We as a council can see there is room for restructuring...we know some change is needed, but this change must come from the grass roots and be on our own terms." –*RM of Oakdale #320, Kindersley, March 27.*
- "We feel that we could start amalgamation negotiations with our hamlets and villages and see how that works first." – *RM of Winslow, Kindersley, March 27.*
- "It appears all municipalities and the majority of the public agree that some downsizing is required." – *Town of Maidstone, Maidstone, March 28.*
- "The need for this report would have been eliminated if present population criteria for urban areas had been maintained." – *Reginald Wagner, Swift Current, March 29.*
- "We do believe there is room for minor consolidation." – *RM of Willow Bunch #42, Assiniboia, March 30.*
- "There are some positive aspects to amalgamation, but the [Task Force] proposal is on far too large a scale." – *RM of Barrier Valley #397, Melfort, April 11.*
- "While amalgamation should probably take place among those sparsely-populated, nine-township rural municipalities across southern Saskatchewan, that is not to say the same situation applies across the province." – *Town & RM of Shellbrook, Prince Albert, April 11.*
- "If existing criteria were defined and enforced municipalities could be almost halved with little detrimental effects." – *RM of Paddockwood #520, Prince, Albert, April 11.*
- "There is nothing in legislation to require loss of status if the population falls below that minimum. There is no minimum population requirement for RM's. If we are looking to emulate Alberta, there are minimum incorporation requirements in their legislation." – *RM of Prince Albert #461, Prince Albert, April 11.*
- "Adjustments need only be made to reflect the changes in the demographics of this province, technological advancements, faster transportation and communications, and moderate changes in the nature of municipal service requirements. In other words, restructuring of municipalities similar to what they were in the 1920's...Presently to equal population of the 1920's would require an amalgamation of five or six rural municipalities." – *Fred Sutter, Saskatoon, April 13.*
- "Although there may be some advantages to a certain amount of restructuring, the proposed structural change goes much too far." – *Town of Indian Head Brief.*
- "Some amalgamation is overdue." – *RM of Monet #257 Brief.*

Need for Major Restructuring

- "We must rapidly move to governance structures that address common populations ...Obviously our governance structures must be larger to accommodate that horizontal integration." – *RM of Rudy #284, Outlook, March 27.*
- "Consolidation is long past overdue...." – *Allan Gifford, Outlook, March 27.*
- "One only has to study the population demographics and I feel certain that there is some good in the current proposal for restructuring...." – *Gerald Murphy, Prince Albert, April 11.*
- "It will be impossible to provide equity and fairness without creating a structure of more or less equals." – *Mark Thompson, Saskatoon, April 13.*

2. Views on Number of Municipalities

- Many submissions do not explicitly broach the idea of an appropriate number of municipalities.
- Implicitly, however, many submissions seem to suggest that the precise number of municipalities should not be an issue of major concern.
- Some submissions that adress the issue suggest that the nature of Saskatchewan's geography and farm economy necessitate a large number of municipalities.
- Many submissions question the Task Force's rationale for suggesting that Saskatchewan could be better served by fewer than 125 municipalities.
- However, many submissions indicate, either implicitly or explicitly that at the very least "minor consolidation" is required.
- Minor consolidation envisioned in those submissions emphasize either:
  - The enforcement of minimum population criteria or the implementation and enforcement of new criteria; or
  - The consolidation of very small urban municipalities with very small populations, and some rural municipalities who were facing major challenges in covering administrative and operating costs due to a combination of very small populations and very small assessment bases.

Quotes on Number of Municipalities

- "Most SUMA Board members remain unconvinced that the number of new municipal units proposed in the Interim Report (fewer than 125) is the right number...." – *Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association (SUMA) Brief.*
- "The challenges that exist have arisen due to influences external to municipalities and we do not see a single issue that could be resolved or even mitigated by reducing the number of municipalities."
  – *Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities (SARM) Brief*
- "The report says that 850 municipalities is too many for a province the size of Saskatchewan. That may be so. But there is nothing in this report to support the claim that 125 is the right number either." – *Saskatchewan Party Brief.*
- "Of course there should be some changes in our municipal structures....But a flat out, heavy handed, forced reduction of 1,000 jurisdictions to 125 would violate every principle that has given life to the rural core of this province."
  – *Midlakes Community Coalition, Outlook, March 27.*
- "Saskatchewan has 47% of the cultivated land in Canada – this requires more roads and local service centres. The population of a municipality is immaterial to good governance." – *Town & RM of Craik, Village of Aylesbury, Outlook, March 27.*
- "Our municipality would agree in principle to the concept of moderate consolidation ...done on a voluntary basis...." – *RM of Mountain View #318, Kindersley, March 27.*
- "To dwell on the number of governments rather than their efficiency, responsiveness and effectiveness is counter-productive...Such comparisons are not appropriate...perhaps it would be better to compare the amount of area served by RM's rather than the number of people."
  – *Gerard Hoppe, North Battleford, March 28.*
- "The Interim Report recommends a major consolidation of existing rural and urban municipalities to something less than 125. While we are not given any definitive understanding of how many less than 125 might eventually be considered, we believe regardless of any final number that could be chosen, legislated consolidation is totally unacceptable." – *Town of Eastend, RM of White Valley #49, Shaunavon, March 29.*
- "It would have been far simpler to enforce the existing statutes and eliminate small hamlets and villages that are no longer viable."
  – *Don Pearson, Shaunavon, March 29.*

- "Possibly we should justify the number of municipal units based on the amount of cultivated acres in Saskatchewan or based on the number of kilometres of highways. Surely these statistics would show that there are not too many municipal units; possibly there should be more to look after the vast geographic area."
  – *RM of Hart Butte, Assiniboia, March 30.*
- "The current proposal is too much, too quickly."
  – *South Central Health District, Weyburn, March 30.*
- "The provincial government should make every effort, through consultation and negotiation, to end up with the fewest number of municipalities possible."
  – *Norman McLeod, Yorkton, April 10.*
- "I concede that amalgamation is required. However, I feel that a figure of 200 municipalities is more realistic...." – *Emil Korchinski, Yorkton, April 10.*
- "Major consolidation will not address the problems of rural depopulation and composition." – *Town & RM of Langenburg #181, Yorkton, April 10.*
- "We disagree with the major consolidation approach to reduce municipalities to under 125." – *RM of Paddockwood #520, Prince, Albert, April 11.*
- "In determining which of the small urbans should be forced to amalgamate with their neighbours, criteria could be set. For example if the assessment and/or population of a town or village were to dwindle to 60% of the threshold to receive specific municipal status." – *Town & RM of Shellbrook, Prince Albert, April 11.*
- "If the major consolidation option proposed by the Task Force (125 municipalities) cannot guarantee that citizens continue to have the same or better level of and access to services, then the government should not implement such major change."
  – *Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), Regina, April 12.*
- "It is unreasonable to assume that imposed amalgamations based on an arbitrary number of municipalities...will offer a better alternative."
  – *RM of Bratt's Lake #129, Village of Wilcox, Regina, April 12.*
- "I think units of 3-10 rural and small urban municipalities should be given very serious consideration. This would reduce the number of individual municipalities considerably." – *Robert Carruthers, Saskatoon, April 13.*
- "Realistically the numbers of urban municipalities should be reduced by at least 200. The number of rural municipalities should be reduced from the current 297 municipalities to between 70 and 100 municipalities." – *Fred Sutter, Saskatoon, April 13.*
- "In a war of numbers, based on per capita, rural Saskatchewan can not win."
  – *RM of Biggar #347, Saskatoon, April 13.*
- "Sustainability is not directly related to the number of governments or size of districts, it is a result of the attitudes of the people that live there and what they want for their future." – *RM of Sasman #336, Wynyard, April 14.*
- "If reversion occurred, Saskatchewan municipalities would be reduced by 20%. Legislation could be amended to increase population requirements for the establishment of an urban government...assuming that 500 is the population...a further 29% reduction would occur. No legislation exists for the number of townships or population base for a rural municipality. We agree that in certain situations, consolidation of municipalities is needed." – *RM of Emerald #277, Wynyard, April 14.*
- "CFIB found that 60 percent of small business owners in Saskatchewan supported the idea of reducing the number of local governments on the basis that there would be tax savings. However, it is important to note that small business owners favour voluntary amalgamation." – *Canadian Federation of Independent Business Brief.*
- A starting point to this issue would be to set guidelines for municipalities. Give deadlines for some amalgamations such as population minimums and rural municipality size (number of townships) or even basing size on assessments." – *Fay Hansen Brief.*
- "I agree with the plan to change the municipal government structure...We cannot afford the present system...." – *Dawn Mackenzie Brief.*
- "I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on the long overdue position of municipal reorganization...No matter how efficient present systems may be, we can almost always achieve greater efficiencies...." – *Gordon Bonokoski Brief.*
- "Apparently numbers are more important than efficiency." – *Village of Buchanan.*

3. Views on Size of Municipalities

- The size of municipalities is considered to be a key issue, either explicitly or implicitly, in a majority of submissions. In fact, even those submissions that favour the creation of larger units often note the importance of avoiding the creation of units that are too large.

- Generally, the majority of submissions express concerns regarding either:
  - the potential negative effects and problems associated with restructuring into larger units; or
  - the value of creating larger municipal units.

- These concerns focus on the potential for creating the following:
  - Loss of Community Identity
  - Reduced Accountability
  - Loss of Local Control/Reduced Power
  - Higher Costs/Fewer Services
  - Higher Property Taxes
  - Larger Bureaucracy/Unionization
  - Loss of Community Voluntarism

- Some submissions suggest that the majority of benefits resulting from the creation of larger units will likely benefit the larger communities, rather than smaller communities.

- Most submissions see their communities and municipalities as smaller in relation to others in their area. The result is that they generally fear that there would be a loss for their particular community or municipality in a given region.

- Other submissions suggest that restructuring or the creation of larger units will not improve service delivery or alleviate any inequities or imbalances in the current system.

- Unfortunately, the majority of submissions that broach the issue of 'size of municipalities' do not discuss what they deem to be the optimal size for municipalities.

- The issue is often left unresolved with many expressing the view that "one size does not fit all," and "bigger is not better."

Quotes on Size of Municipalities

- "The current municipal system is structured to service the infrastructure and respond to the environment in which municipalities operate, as well as to provide other services and programs to ratepayers. We have seen no evidence that would suggest larger municipal units would be able to do the job any better." – *Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities (SARM) Brief.*
- "Bigger is not better or some of our health districts would not be poised for collapse today." – *Town & RM of Craik, Village of Aylesbury, Outlook, March 27.*
- "It is much better to create larger units of government, with greater resources (financial and population), and let them manage their own affairs." – *Allan Gifford, Outlook, March 27.*
- "We have always been concerned about the number of regions envisioned and the size and nature of the regions." – *Town of Kindersley, Kindersley, March 27.*
- "Big is not necessarily better. That has already been proven by our health districts." – *RM of Kindersley, Kindersley, March 27.*
- "Bigger has never been better after an optimum size…The size of municipality is irrelevant. What is relevant is if the municipality is fiscally responsible and provides basic required services (directly or indirectly)." – *Town of St. Walburg Taxpayers, Maidstone, March 28.*
- "Small RM's were designed for the horse and buggy days, wake up concillors, the horse and buggy days are gone." – *Warren Iverson, North Battleford, March 28.*
- "The provincial government should establish some criteria for a municipal unit that would be flexible…it shouldn't simply be based on population because of the problem with density or the lack thereof across this province." – *Cindy Hoppe, North Battleford, March 28.*
- "If the number and size of municipalities can make such a great difference, as the Task Force suggests, then perhaps the needs of Saskatchewan people would be better served by the amalgamation of the four western provinces into one territory." - *RM of Excelsior #166, Swift Current, March 29.*
- "Population is no prerequisite to municipal size as municipalities provide services to land and industries, not just people." – *RM of Wolseley, Windthorst #155, April 10.*
- "Why is there no minimum population size for Rural Municipalities…Is it not time that we moved from the 'horse and buggy days' when 25-30 kilometres was considered a full day's journey 'into the twenty-first century' with modern transportation and the electronic age of communication." – *Gerald Murphy, Prince Albert, April 11.*
- "Boundaries can be and are used as controlling tools. Could it be that the underlying reason for change is that the Provincial Government has a desire to remove what strength remains in rural Saskatchewan into the already powerful urban boundaries?" – *RM of Kelvington #366, RM of Ponass Lake #367, Town of Kelvinton, Melfort, April 11.*
- "This Interim Report would lead us to believe that only through large districts can we deliver services through economies of scale. We need only look to the Health Board Structure where the focus of Government became administration and not what mattered most." – *Town of Ogema, RM of Key West #70, Ogema Economic Development Committee, Regina, April 12.*
- "Big government structures just prevent adaptation to local situations…." – *Jim Elliot, New Green Alliance Party, Regina, April 12.*
- "It is people who are governed, not areas of land. A governmental unit must have a significant population base to justify its existence." – *Fred Sutter, Saskatoon, April 13.*
- "Certainly economic and demographic trends are affecting municipalities… We do not believe that larger municipalities will affect or change those trends." – *RM of Lost River #313, Saskatoon, April 13.*
- "Creating larger municipal units will not create economic growth. While large urban centres may see some economic growth – rural areas will lose that growth at the same ratio." – *RM of Hazel Dell #355, Village of Lintlaw, Wynyard, April 14.*

Quotes on Concerns About Larger Municipal Units

Loss of Community Identity

- "There will be other losses…the loss of sense of community…that is so alive and well in rural Saskatchewan." – *RM of Porcupine #395, Melfort, April 11.*
- "If the heart of communities (local municipal governments) are removed, what is left?" – *RM of The Gap #39, Village of Ceylon, Regina, April 12.*
- Can new lines on a map turn people around, cause them to break old trading, recreational, cultural, work and friendship patterns, or change inter-town rivalries… Forced amalgamation would split up our natural, life-long patterns and replace them with arbitrary new ones." – *Joan Eyolfson Cadham, Wynyard, April 14.*

Reduced Accountability

- "Local representation, local decision making and local accountability will be gone forever." - *RM of Oakdale # 320, Kindersley, March 27.*
- "The fundamental downfall of regional governance is that it dictates to the people the policy they are to live by, not the people dictating their desire of policy to live by." – *Villages of Climax, Bracken & RM of Lone Tree #18, Shaunavon, March 29.*
- "Amalgamation will only increase costs and strip us of any say in our local government." – *RM of Lake Alma #8, Weyburn, March 30.*
- "When you take away the local politics, the voice and needs of the people gets harder to be heard and felt." – *Coronach Agricultural Society, Assiniboia, March 30.*

Loss of Local Control & Reduced Power

- "Rural Saskatchewan residents will lose local control, community closeness, services, neighbouring municipal relationships, volunteer organizations, population and social and economic benefits." – *Town of Maidstone, Maidstone, March 28; Petitions Opposed To Forced Consolidation of Local Governments.*
- "Communities would be experiencing an even greater loss of control over aspects of their lives that were providing some stability."
  – *RM of Old Post #43, Village of Wood Mountain, Assiniboia, March 30.*
- "Residents of Saskatchewan's smallest communities… may feel alienated, disenfranchised and disillusioned with a more distant regional government."
  – *Urban Municipal Administrators Association of Saskatchewan (UMAAS) Brief.*

Higher Costs & Fewer Services

- "Some of the region will have to settle for fewer services so that the rest of the region can receive more." – *RM of Grandview #349, Kindersley, March 27.*
- "The taxpayer will pay even more for a service that is no longer local, or pay for services that we really don't want or need while not receiving the level of service for the things we do need." – *Richmound Maintenance Area, Shaunavon, March 29.*
- "Our experience is that centralized services cost us more & offer us less." – *Town of Eastend, RM of White Valley #49, Shaunavon, March 29.*

Higher Property Taxes

- "Local people are asking…will my property taxes go up as they have in other areas where consolidation has been imposed?"
  – *RM of Eldon #471, Maidstone, March 28.*
- "How can we possibly benefit from a larger unit when we can be assured our mill rate will increase and accountability will decrease"
  – *RM of Glen McPherson # 46, Shaunavon, March 29.*

Larger Bureaucracy/ Unionization

- "The first thing that will happen is that the unions will be out in full force and we know that a unionized labour force will cost us more than what we have now." – *RM of Winslow #319, Kindersley, March 27.*
- "Larger units will mean more red tape and slower responses."
  – *RM of Arlington #79, Shaunavon, March 29.*
- "We can be sure that our taxes will simply disappear down an administrative black hole." – *RM of Bengough #40, Assiniboia, March 30.*

Loss of Voluntarism

- "In the process of making the municipal structure larger, the loss of voluntarism will negate any gains of savings in administration costs."
  – *RM of St. Andrews #287, Outlook, March 27.*
- "It is our concern that amalgamation will cause our volunteers to lose faith in the system and stop giving of their time and energy to their communities because their will be no identity or reason for them to care." *Town of Maple Creek, Swift Current, March 29.*

4. Views on Types of Municipalities

- Many submissions address, either explicitly or implicitly, the issue of the two main types of municipalities that have been proposed in the Interim report:
  - Regional Municipal Districts
  - Metropolitan Municipal Districts

Regional Municipal Districts

Views on Regional Municipal Districts

- The majority of submissions express views with respect to regional municipal districts.
- The major concern with the proposed regional municipal districts is the proposed integration of urban and rural municipalities.
- Generally, the concern of members from both rural and urban communities is that this would result in a rural-urban imbalance in the population of the proposed Regional Municipal Districts.
- Furthermore, they emphasize that urban and rural communities have very different sets of needs and interests that are very difficult, if not impossible, to reconcile within a single municipal structure.
- The concern is that the mixing of urban and rural communities would result in challenges and problems of trying to reconcile the service and financial needs and preferences of two very different types of communities.

Metropolitan Municipal Districts

Views on Metropolitan Municipal Districts

- A substantial number of submissions express views with respect to the proposed Metropolitan Municipal Districts.
- Such briefs generally express a concern regarding the proposed consolidation of cities and their neighbouring urban and rural municipalities.
- The major concern is that such consolidation would have an adverse effect on the mill rates for ratepayers living in the rural and urban communities that would be consolidated with cities.
- For example, a particularly strong view was expressed against this proposal by certain large and small businesses that are currently located in some of those urban and rural municipalities closest to the major cities; especially those in the vicinity of Regina.

Other Matters Regarding Types of Municipalities

Views on Other Matters Regarding Types

- Some submissions also express a number of views on other matters regarding the types of municipalities, including:
  - The effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the proposed local advisory committees created from existing municipal governments within restructured municipal districts;
  - Single vs. two-tier types of municipalities;
  - The need for coterminus boundaries between municipal, education, health and other regional authorities; and
  - Alternative proposals for types of municipalities.

Quotes on Regional Municipal Districts & Rural-Urban Integration

- "Most SUMA Board members also have serious concerns about whether the particular structure proposed for a new system is the best possible system. The case has not yet been proven that any potential benefits…would outweigh the negative impacts from eliminating councils." - *Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association (SUMA) Brief.*
- "We must rapidly move to governance structures that address common populations. Horizontal integration is essential in sparsely population areas." – *RM of Rudy #284, Outlook, March 27.*
- "It would be totally unrealistic to surmise that rural residences will receive water and sewer services, street lighting and garbage pick-up just because they would be part of a regional government. It is however very realistic that the rural areas will pay more in taxes. Studies have proven this to be factual." – *RM of Eldon #471, Maidstone, March 28.*
- "While many interests of both rural and small town residents are similar, an even greater amount are not similar at all. The delivery of services to rural people does not directly coincide with the delivery to the residents of towns and villages." – *Brian Duriez, Maidstone, March 28.*
- "We believe that due to the large variation in the functions performed by rural and urban municipalities, that rural and urban governments must be kept separate." – *RM of Arlington #79, Shaunavon, March 29.*
- "Rural and urban governments will never be the same, because their interests are not the same. we can speak with authority on this subject, because our office is a joint office with the Village of Limerick." – *RM of Stonehenge #73, Assiniboia, March 30.*
- "The proposal to combine large towns and cities with rural municipalities is very disturbing. While there are some common interests there are also many differences.One pamjor problem would be tax incidence." – *RM of Wolsely #155, Windthorst, April 10.*
- "Urban Saskatchewan is different than Rural Saskatchewan. The people are different, the way of life is different, the expectations are different. It is this very diversity that makes us individual and unique, each one as important to society as the other…Should amalgamation be a foregone conclusion, recognize the difference between the present urban/rural municipalities and base decisions to protect the rural way of life." – *RM of Flett's Springs #429, Melfort, April 11.*
- "The avenue that I feel will be of least resistance in this 'process of change' is to have a matching of similar municipalities…Rural Municipality and Rural Municipality should be the way to go in this unifying process." – *Gerald Murphy, Prince Albert, April 11.*
- "We also see several problems arising from the amalgamation of rural municipalities with towns since there are different priorities. While RM councils are mainly concerned with providing farmers with good road access, town councils are preoccupied with infra-structure projects and recreation." – *Town & RM of Shellbrook, Prince Albert, April 11.*
- "In principle [the amalgamation of rural and urban areas] could work. In practice, they would flounder, if they result in the larger urban populations controlling councils by virtue of their voting numbers and the rural populations paying unduly the costs of the new government through their property taxes." – *James Hockley, Regina, April 12.*
- "Currently there is an increasing split amongst urban based and rural based residents in Saskatchewan. If large scale amalgamation proceeds, this split between urban and rural will widen…There still has to be differentiation between rural and urban municipalities." – *RM of Cupar #218, Regina, April 12.*
- "There is fear that rural concerns will take lower precedence than the urban concerns for economic development and that rural tax dollars will be funneled into the urban areas and rural roads will go into disrepair." – *RM of Lakeview #337, Wynyard, April 14.*
- "Surely it is possible to encourage small, struggling hamlets, villages, towns and municipalities to amalgamate with whatever surronding municipalities are their obvious choices." – *RM of Monet #257 Brief.*
- "We are a relatively small rural municipality…and would be a good candidate for a voluntary amalgamation with neighbouring municipalities. The Council is in favour of a negotiated amalgamation with neighbouring rural municipalities but is definitely opposed to having urban and rural amalgamations." – *RM of Tullymet #216 Brief.*
- "There is probably a case for some reform, but lumping urban, resort and rural municipalities altogether is not the way. Their needs are all different…." – *John Scott Brief.*

Quotes on Metropolitan Municipal Districts

- "Cities have different needs than Rural Municipalities, they require high costs installations of sewer & water, sidewalks and paved streets, rural residents provdie and pay for their own needs in this respect." – *RM of Battle River #438, North Battleford, March 28.*
- "The dream of combining rural and large urban municipalities together may look feasible on paper, but reality proves otherwise. This has been tried and proven not to work…The urban municipalities get the rural revenue; the rural municipalities get the urban municipal mill rate." – *RM of Prince Albert, Prince Albert, April 11.*
- "Restructuring will be most successful if municipalities with similar philosophies on municipal governance choose to merge…Large urban centers will typically provide a range of amenities…Most of these amenities are of no consequence to the nieghbouring rural municipality…forcing rural municipalities to pay for urban services they are unlikely to benefit from, is fundamentally unfair." - *RM of Sherwood #159, Regina, April 12.*
- "White City, Emerald Park and the country residential around White City should all be one municipality that pays equally for the services they equally receive. We are opposed to being part of a Metropolitan District because there is nothing in such a district for us. People moved from Regina to White City, Emerald Park, Lumsden, Pilot Butte, Balgonie, and RM acreages for good reason so we know they don't want to return into that municipality." – *Village of White City, Regina, April 12.*
- "At no time should urban and rural municipalities be legislated to merge… restructuring can only occur between municipalities with shared philosophies." – *Roy Klym, Regina, April 12.*
- "We view the proposed 'Metropolitan Municipal Districts' as a direct disadvantage to rural communities surrounding the province's larger cities. Due to the larger population in the city,. decisions will be made in favour of urban residents. Rural Residents will share their tax base with the city but will see fewer services, less representation and added costs." – *RM of Pense #160, Regina, April 12.*
- "IPSCO opposes any initiative which would bring it under the governmental and taxing authority of the City of Regina or bring it into an expanded rural municipal area under circumstances where its property tax liability will be increased." – *IPSCO, Regina, April 12.*
- "An important part of our business plan to offset the high costs of doing business in Regina, was to locate our large facilities in the Rm of Sherwood where there is adequate space and a lower tax structure. The viability of our businesses depends on a competitive cost environment." – *Gavin Semple, Brandt Industrties, Regina, April 12.*
- "In towns and villages which are closer to the large urban centers (i.e., Saskatoon) we are seeing an increasing number of people moving back to the 'rural' way of life by moving into small towns…they cite things such as 'lower taxes, quiet streets, knowing who your neighbours are…these answers provide sound economic reasons why we need to retain local autonomy." – *Town of Allan, Saskatoon, April 13.*
- "Your report asks the question: 'Does it make sense to leave metropolitan centers and neighbouring satellite or bedroom communities as separate municipalities?' – The answer would be a resounding Yes – Current interface problems are non-existent… Future planning and development problems could easily be addressed through existing Planning Districts…Large urban municipalities simply swallowing up their surrounding territories would be huge mistake." – *Village of Bradwell, Saskatoon, April 13.*
- "If tax rates increase in rural areas and surrounding villages and hamlets that don't have the city conveniences and services; that should be a good enough reason to cause another migration of people…to Alberta." – *Terry Woroniuk Brief.*
- "The attempt to combine urban and rural sectors into a metropolitan municipal district ….has the potential to be a major catastrophe by trying to blend two different types of governance philosophies into one municipal government." – *WF Botkin Construction.*
- "Communities like White City which have grown in close proximity to larger centres …exist because of the many negative issues relating to City administration that people believe they could not change…Any amalgamation such as a Metropolitan District would only exacerbate this situation." – *Barry Armstrong Brief.*
- "We do not want to belong to a large urban administrative area where we are faceless and nameless…." – *Town of Maple Creek Brief.*

Quotes on Other Matters Regarding Types of Municipalities

- "Municipal reorganization is not a case of if it happens but when it takes place and what form or shape. What being the key word. Garcea and Stabler would transfer all municipal government small towns, rural municipalities, etc. to the twelve smaller cities in the province. SARM wishes to leave things as they are, both are wrong." – *Gerald Moriarty, Yorkton, April 10.*

Local Advisory Committees

- "Instead of using our local councils as advisory committees to a [regional municipal district], we would propose using a [regional municipal district] advisory committee to the local councils. This proposal has been proven beneficial in our area as we have set up a West Central Municipal Government Committee that consists of 74 urban and rural municipalities which address concerns for all municipalities." – *RM of Mountain View #318, Kindersley, March 27.*
- "Your suggestion that these new governances would have local advisory committees to represent their various communities. You know that this will have no impact. We only have to look to our education system where we have local school boards who supposedly act in an advisory position, but actually have no power what so ever." – *Village of Dysart, Regina, April 12.*
- "The concept of 'local advisory committees' is a slap in the face for rural residents." – *RM of South Qu'Appelle #157, Regina, April 12.*
- "Advocacy, advisory committees would only create another layer of government with superficial functions. And, who would want to sit on a paltry Committee knowing that all they could do is listen to complaints?" – *Town of Raymore, Wynyard, April 14.*
- "The report suggests local committees to represent the communities, but like our local school boards, how much power will they have?" – *Village of Buchanon Brief.*

Coterminus Boundaries

- "I note the Task Force feels other authorities should govern education and health with which I have no argument. These authorities should however, share common boundaries or populations firstly to develop a clear regional vision, and secondly to move away form the stovepipe, single agency thinking that destroys horizontal integration in rural areas." – *Russ McPherson, Outlook, March 27.*
- "It might be to the advantage of everyone to ensure we have coterminus boundaries," – *Erhard Poggemiller, Kindersley, March 27.*
- "The province further consider the merits of allowing for a governing structure which may include a combination of Municipal, Health and Education governance by a single Council…." – *Mark Thompson, Saskatoon, April 13.*

Alternative Proposals

- "We note the Task Force identified alternate service delivery models in their report and rejected those in favour of the forced model. SARM believes those rejected alternate models are worthy of further consideration by our membership." –*Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities (SARM)*
- "One of the options I would like to see at least explored, would be a type of county system. Currently, education, health and municipalities all elected by the same people, compete with each for resources…Would not the electorate be well served by all these local governments working together…." – *Muriel Conacher, Maidstone, March 28.*
- "We propose a middle of the road option – Community Municipalities…In a Community Municipality we look at service-area; be it fire department, post office, school, recreation facilities, whereby the people that receive the service pay equitably for them and the benefits of growth and economic development are returned to all the people that contribute to that occuring growth." – *Village of White City, Regina, April 12.*
- "I think units of 3-10 rural and small urban municipalities should be given very serious consideration." – *Robert Carruthers, Saskatoon, April 13.*
- "Possibly, the creation of District Planning, Development and Service Authorities combined with voluntary amalgamations of existing municipal governments would be workable without losing the efficiency and grass roots involvement that is required for good local government." – *RM of Hillsdale, Village of Neilburg, Maidstone, March 28.*
- "We would suggest at this time that there is a real need to restore the community spirit in rural and urban Saskatchewan by developing a 'Regional Community Partnership.'" – *Josh Storey, Wendy Smith, Rob Sweet, Stan Beacom, Art Cay Brief.*

XIV. VIEWS ON APPROACHES TO RENEWAL

- The bulk of submissions, given during the hearings, focus extensively on approaches to renewal. In fact, no other issue attracted such a high degree of attention. Indeed, it overshadowed other equally important issues.

1. Views on 'Directed Consultative Approach'

- Unfortunately, the Task Force's recommendation for a "directed consultative approach" to restructuring the municipal system was interpreted to mean only "forced amalgamation."
- Generally, this interpretation did not consider the types or degrees of 'direction' that could be provided by the provincial government in renewing the system through various means, such as financial incentives, pilot projects, and facilitation teams, as noted in a few submissions.
- Consequently, most submissions express their views on what they describe as "forced amalgamation."

2. Views on Forced Amalgamation

- The vast majority of submissions oppose what they describe as "forced amalgamation" and support what they describe as "voluntary amalgamation."
- There was also strong opposition to "forced amalgamation" among the majority of participants in the Task Force hearings.
- This was evident not only in the oral presentation of submissions and oral statements, but also in the vote conducted at SARM's request at the end of every hearing.
- Every hearing, without exception, concluded with a request by a member of the SARM board to conduct a vote by 'show of hands' of those present to the following question:
  - **"Are you in favour of 'forced amalgamation'?"**
- The Task Force allowed the vote to proceed. The result was the same in every case:
  - All those who voted were opposed to "forced amalgamation."
  - No one indicated they were in favour of "forced amalgamation."

Quotes on Directed Consultative Approach

- "It is hard to imagine how the members of the Task Force could have been listening to municipal leaders and the taxpayers they serve when they endorsed the so-called 'Directed Consultative Approach' to renewal which is nothing more than bureaucratic double-speak for forced amalgamation." – *Saskatchewan Party Brief.*
- "I believe [larger units] would be much better to be created from above, with local issues not clouding the matter. No process will be perfect, but a directed approach should create a more desirable outcome." – *Allan Gifford, Outlook, March 27.*
- "We feel it is the responsibility – no the duty, of the Provincial government to restructure the system with consultation and dialog at each step of the process. The time for action has arrived." – *RM of Rudy #284, Outlook, March 27.*
- "Any municipal renewal MUST be ultimately a provincial act. Renewal may be discussed, debated, argued about, planned by all affected parties, but it cannot be negotiated. At the moment of truth, the provincial government must rearrange the scenery and accept the consequences for its actions." – *James Hockley, Regina, April 12.*
- "I encourage the Task Force to rethink how to express what you mean by 'Directed'… Are there some components…that need to be treated with more direction than other components? Are there alternatives, which can be offered rather than absolutes?" – *Mark Thompson, Saskatoon, April 13.*
- "The province must legislate reorganization. Neither SARM or SUMA has ever taken leadership in this regard…." – *Fred Sutter, Saskatoon, April 13.*

Quotes on Forced Amalgamation

- "SARM is not in favour of forced amalgamation…We have come to this conclusion not out of self interest, but rather based upon the facts of our research and the experiences of other municipalities who have been forced to amalgamate…where forced amalgamation has occurred, the results were *not* economic growth and the improved delivery of services and programs."– *Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities (SARM).*
- "SUMA strongly opposes any proposals for forced amalgamation and is insisting on a voluntary approach to any reorganization."
  – *Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association (SUMA).*
- "Forced amalgamation is totally unacceptable." – *RM of Roundhill #467, North Battleford, March 28.*
- "Forced amalgamation doesn't work." – *RM of Douglas #436, North Battleford, March 28.*
- "Previous experience with Health Districts should be lesson enough regarding forced amalgamation." – *RM of Excelsior, Swift Current, March 29.*
- "Forced amalgamation with its attendant high cost, low service and bureaucratic inefficiency is not the answer." – *Reginald Wagner, Swift Current, March 29.*
- "We must emphasize that a forced amalgamation should not even be considered before the voluntary approach is promoted and exhausted."
  – *Southwest Urban Municipal Administrators Association, Swift Current, March 29.*
- "Centralization, mandatory, forced, must – all these words are not welcome in rural Saskatchewan…Rural residents are still reeling, angry & abandoned from the health district consolidation." – *Red Coat Road & Rail, Assiniboia, March 30.*
- "To force change on the people of Saskatchewan in a manner suggested by the Task Force would be to take away the democratic rights of the people. The very democratic rights that this province and country was built on." – *RM of Estevan #5, Weyburn, March 30.*
- "Forced amalgamation is not desired by Rural Saskatchewan and will not help build a stronger rural Saskatchewan." – *RM of Clayton #333 Ratepayers, Yorkton, April 10.*
- "The Town of Sturgis is venomously opposed to any form of forced amalgamation of municipalities, and feels that it will lead to the destruction of the rural way of life in Saskatchewan. It will destroy families, communities and the ultimately the province itself." – *Town of Sturgis, Yorkton, April 10.*
- "The forced amalgamation of Municipal Government in rural Saskatchewan is not wanted and will not help rural Saskatchewan." – *RM of Canwood #494, Village of Debden, Village of Canwood, Prince Albert, April 11.*
- "The RM of Leask #464 is against forced amalgamation but is not against change."
  – *RM of Leask #464, Prince Albert, April 11.*
- "The forced amalgamation and dissolving of rural municipalities and communities will be one more step towards the suppression of Rural Saskatchewan."
  – *RM of Buckland #491, Prince Albert, April 11.*
- "We respectfully request that all further action with respect to forced amalgamation be ceased immediately in order that our councils may focus on efficiently and effectively serving the needs of their rural residents." – *RM of Edenwold #158, Regina, April 12.*
- "Forced amalgamation…contributes nothing to the development of viable communities …by a consensual, incremental process, real change can be effected without severe disruption to the public sense of community…forced amalgamation of peoples by a higher authority is not a guarantee of success, but brings with it the danger that individual differences may be exacerbated by a structure not supported by those who have to live with it." – *RM of Aberdeen #373, Saskatoon, April 13.*
- "Forced municipal consolidation is undemocratic. The mere threat of force in itself has caused people to resent whatever form of governance is being imposed. Local acceptance is absolutely necessary for any form of governance or any program if it is to have even a remote chance at being successful."
  – *Big Gully Regional Economic Development Authority, Saskatoon, April 13.*
- "Council is opposed to amalgamations being forced… especially considering the Provincial Government's track record with health care reform." - *RM of Saskman #336, Wynyard, April 14.*
- "As one of the remaining Rural Development Corporations still in operation we feel forced amalgamations could destroy the relations that have already been achieved between the rural and urban members." – *Kelsey Development Corporation Brief.*
- "The cost of forced amalgamation in terms of aggravation of the rural population would be enormous…." – *Thomas Boysen, Boysen Consulting Brief.*

3. Views on Voluntary Amalgamation

- The vast majority of those making submissions as well as those participating in the vote at the end of every session, expressed support for 'voluntary amalgamation.'

- Generally, "voluntary amalgamation" seems to refer to a process where individual municipal councils and/or communities would decide, on their own, to consider and undertake a municipal amalgamation initiative.

- However, the precise nature of the decision-making processes for "voluntary amalgamation" is generally not discussed in a direct or detailed manner.

- It is not clear, for example, whether voluntary amalgamation means that individual municipal councils, ratepayers, or both should make decisions regarding amalgamation.

- Most submissions do not indicate, in a detailed manner, the precise role of the provincial government in facilitating such decisions.

- However, many submissions indicate there are at least three roles the provincial government could undertake to encourage voluntary consolidation or amalgamation:

- These roles are to:
  - Eliminate any obstacles (statutory and financial) to voluntary consolidation or amalgamation including obstacles to rural-urban consolidation or amalgamation;
  - Introduce incentives (statutory and financial) that would entice municipalities and communities to engage in voluntary amalgamation; and
  - Clarify and facilitate the technical aspects of various and alternative processes of voluntary consolidation or amalgamation.

- In sum, "Voluntary Amalgamation" is the preferred approach of the vast majority of those making submissions and attending the hearings. Essentially, it seems to mean that amalgamations are to be strictly a matter of local initiative and local preference, with some limited facilitation and assistance by the provincial government, as outlined above.

Quotes on Voluntary Amalgamation by Decision of Local Councils

- "At no time has the idea of amalgamation been rejected by councils and ratepayers of this province if the process is driven by the bottom up."
  – *RM of Harris #316, Outlook, March 27.*
- "I believe that amalgamation is necessary and that, it is already taking place in areas where councillors and ratepayers see an advantage."
  – *Evan Simpson, Kindersley, March 27.*
- "Amalgamations should occur on a voluntary basis when it makes economic sense to do so. We are not opposed to consolidation and would gladly lead the charge if some advantage could be found or demonstrated for doing so…."
  – *Town of Eston, Kindersley, March 27.*
- "We feel that amalgamation of municipalities must be a voluntary decision among local governments to result in a positive improvement."
  – *RM of Round Hill #467, North Battleford, March 28.*
- "Amalgamation or consolidation of municipalities should remain, as it has been, a voluntary process. We, at the local level, know best what our people want and need."
  – *Town of Cut Knife, North Battleford, March 28.*
- "Local government will be prudent and use voluntary amalgamations to their best advantage where individual circumstances dictate that this would be the most appropriate action to be taken." – *RM of Brittania #502, Maidstone, March 28.*
- "Get out of our face! We the people will make our own decisions and, yes, even our own mistakes." – *RM of Val Marie #17, Shaunavon, March 29.*
- "If municipalities want to amalgamate, it should be left entirely to their discretion, done by mutual consent and be handled locallaly as best suits the circumstance."
  – *Richmound Maintenance Area, Shaunavon, March 29.*
- "No one is arguing that change is needed in our municipal structure. But let us initiate the changes. The Village of Glentworth is presently undertaking its own dissolution to become a hamlet within the RM. This was done on our own initiative"
  – *RM of Waverly #44, Village of Glentworth, Assiniboia, March 30.*
- "It is the contention of this municipality that the voluntary approach is the only approach that should ever bring about municipal change, and further, that the voluntary approach will certainly work. While it is quite likely that the voluntary approach will not achieve the desired results of the Task Force, it is quite likely that it will achieve the desired results of the people of Saskatchewan." – *RM of Estevan #5, Weyburn, March 30.*
- "There is a need for very small villages or hamlets or unpopulated divisions within rural municipalities to be amalgamated. But this should only be done if the urban and rural councils decide that amalgamation is the right thing to do and if there will be significant cost savings for the ratepayers of the area." – *Tim Gerein, Weyburn, March 30.*
- "The status quo may not be the best option for the future…but as yet there have not been any viable alternatives presented to the municipalities that would allow them to decide the best course of action for their situation." – *Town of Radville, Regina, April 12.*
- "Municipalities have now and have always worked together when there is a need, they have also been cognizant of the needs for change and have made them when there is a need. Leave it to the municipalities who are quite capable of deciding on amalgamation when there is a need." - *RM of Hazel Dell #335, Village of Lintlaw, Wynyard, April 14.*
- "We want to orchestrate our own destiny. We will change but we need time to plan."
  – *Town of Cupar, Wynyard, April 14.*
- "Amalgamation, if it is to happen, should be on the advice of local governments and should not be so large that municipalities feel they are losing their autonomy and a say in how their municipality is run." – *Bev and Don Seymour Brief.*
- "I see that the amalgamation of RM's is necessary in the future, but this change should be driven by the RM's themselves and not imposed upon them." – *Brian Anderson Brief.*
- "Amalgamation, which may be inevitable in the future, should be initiated at the grassroots, with individual municipalities deciding when, where and why, while considering the needs of local ratepayers not by senior governments anxious to relieve themselves of their current responsibilities to provide the traditional services to rural Saskatchewan." – *RM of Weyburn #67 Brief.*
- "We have enough intelligence to recognize when amalgamation is necessary and we will get it done." – *Town of Rockglen Brief.*

Quotes on Voluntary Amalgamation Through Grassroots Determination, Plebiscite or Referendum

- "Each municipality should hold a public vote on the question of restructuring before proceeding." – *RM of Milden #286, Outlook, March 27.*
- "We must be given the opportunity to choose our own destiny and the direction that we want to go." – *Kent Dubreil, Outlook, March 27.*
- "Any change that may occur must be grassroots driven." – *RM of Loreburn #254, Outlook, March 27.*
- "Our position is and has been that we are not opposed to amalgamation or consolidation, but that it must be a locally driven decision." – *RM of Snipe Lake #259, Kindersley, March 27.*
- "We as a council can see there is room for restructuring, but this must come from the grass roots not the provincial government." – *RM of Oakdale #320, Kindersley, March 27.*
- "The Council provides the following recommendations…Permit consolidation of municipalities only on a voluntary basis when the matter is locally driven and mandated by a clear majority of local constituents." – *Town of Maidstone, Maidstone, March 28.*
- "A clear and precise question should be voted upon and only the municipalities and communities effected should have the right to vote in a referendum which would be put to the people at the next provincial election." – *Michael Hopfner, Maidstone, March 28.*
- "If two rural municipalities want to join together and the ratepayers in both vote in favour, then that's fine. The people concerned that are affected have now had their say, but let's not have reorganization imposed from the top down." – *Walter Davidson, Maidstone, March 28.*
- "Amalgamation and change must come from the local level." – *RM of Frenchman Butte #501, Maidstone, March 28.*
- "We feel that the creation [of new municipalities] or amalgamation should be voluntary and driven by local desire." – *RM of North Battleford, North Battleford, March 28.*
- "Let the 'people' decide…Let those 'people' who are elected locally, to local government, continue to be accountable to the 'people'. Let these 'people' decide when we should amalgamate." –*Jim Bradley, Gull Lake School Division, Shaunavon, March 29.*
- "The decision to change the structure of municipalities must be left to the local people." – *RM of Arlington #79, Shaunavon, March 29.*
- "Plebiscites should be given on consolidation so that it is civic will which decides renewal." – *Red Coat Road & Rail, Assiniboia, March 30.*
- "The BC Government did and is currently not forcing consolidation. What they are doing is only providing the tools, after that it is voluntary – and in a democratic manner - by plebiscite." – *Analysis of Municipal Renewal (joint submission on behalf of 45 municipalities), Assiniboia, Weyburn, March 30.*
- "We wish to state clearly and concisely that any amalgamation must be driven from the bottom up, and not from the top down. The local taxpayers are in the best position to determine when and how local government should change." – *RM of Golden West #95, Windthorst, April 10.*
- "Every community in the province should have the right to exist as a community until its last resident says good night." – *Town of Broadview, Windthorst, April 10.*
- "And the final step, as it should be in a democracy, is a plebiscite." – *Village of Montmartre, Regina, April 12.*
- "In order to remove any appearance of personal or partisan interests Council has decided to hold a referendum on the idea of amalgamation and will support the choice of the people. We trust the Provincial Government is prepared to… do the same." – *RM of Eagle Creek #376, Saskatoon, April 13.*
- "The voters of this municipality beg that they be given a chance to have their say, to be heard, and to be listened to…." – *RM of Big Quill #308, Wynyard, April 14.*
- "I believe that we are selling the people of rural Saskatchewan short if we do not give them/us the chance to make these changes voluntarily." – *Bob Schulz Brief.*
- "I do believe in freedom of choice and that something as big as an amalgamation should be voted on by those people most affected by it!" – *Jackie Marshall Brief.*
- "I know that I can speak for every resident of our village – please let us govern our own affairs." – *Gwen Nolan Brief.*

Quotes on the Removal of Legislative & Environmental Roadblocks

- "We believe there are roadblocks to voluntary consolidation that could occur if legislation and regulations were changed." – *RM of Snipe Lake #259, Kindersley, March 27.*
- "Legislation should be amended to provide for the amalgamation of urban/urban municipalities, urban/rural municipalities and rural/rural municipalities." –*West Central Municipal Government Committee, Kindersley, March 27.*
- "The RM is concerned over the liability situation that the village would bring to them. The Provincial Government could do something about the environmental concern or most other issues for that matter." – *Town of Luseland, Kindersley, March 27.*
- "The facilitation and removal of roadblocks in the amalgamation of rural-rural, urban-urban or rural-urban governments can and should be a mandate of the Task Force and the Provincial government…." – *RM of St. Andrews #287, Outlook, March 27.*
- "Existing liability issues must be addressed by the Province where small urban municipalities revert as organized hamlets within the rural municipality." – *Town of Maidstone, Maidstone, March 28.*
- "The Government's first step should be to remove current legislative roadblocks to municipal amalgamation…." – *RM of Hudson Bay, Melfort, April 11.*
- "With minor legislative amendments these impediments (aging infrastructure, environmental liabilities, loss of grants/allocations and tax sharing, etc.) could be easily removed. This would alleviate a disincentive for voluntary small urban rationalization." – *Village of Bradwell, Saskatoon, April 13.*
- "There have been stumbling blocks in place since the 1960's which are still firmly in place which have prevented municipalities from joining together." – *Town of Allan, Saskatoon, April 13.*
- "It is our opinion that legislation enabling voluntary amalgamation of 'rurban' districts should be introduced." – *Town of Indian Head Brief*

Quotes on Financial Incentives for Voluntary Amalgamation

- "Give us the incentives and legislation to work with." – *RM of Frenchman Butte #501, Maidstone, March 28.*
- "We disagree that the provincial government cannot afford to provide financial incentives that would encourage municipalities to consolidate. We believe the provincial government should provide sufficient financial incentives for municipalities who voluntarily want to consolidate." – *RM of Arlington #79, Shaunavon, March 29.*
- "If you want to help, give the RM's the choice to amalgamate and maybe some grant funding to restructure as they see fit (maybe more than one RM sharing an office to cut costs)." – *Walter Kruszelnicki, Swift Current, March 29.*
- "Any amalgamation or consolidation…should be optional and should only occur after study of specific consolidations. The province should be providing incentives to municipalities for the consultative work." – *Southeast RM Association, Weyburn, March 30.*
- "All the provincial government needs to do is create the atmosphere and incentives to allow this [voluntary amalgamation] to happen." – *Town & RM of Langenburg, Yorkton, April 10.*
- "The existence of certain urban and rural municipalities that are allegedly too inadequate for proper municipal governance…may have been perpetuated by the Provincial Government's…unconditional funding." – *RM of Blucher #343, Saskatoon, April 13.*

Quotes on Provincial Facilitation of Voluntary Amalgamation

- "We believe there are roadblocks to voluntary consolidation...Some examples are…(lack of) guidelines provided by the provincial government to municipalities for steps to follow to amalgamate." – *RM of Snipe Lake #259, Kindersley, March 27.*
- "The provincial role in this issue should be one of assistance and guidance, not legislative enforcement. For example, the Provincial government should set out guidelines for municipalities to follow when a decision has been made to amalgamate." – *West Central Municipal Government Committee, Kindersley, March 27.*
- "We are proposing that the Task Force…and the Provincial Government…Provide a Master Plan to municipal governments in Saskatchewan which would provide information about how partnerships would work and the positive outcomes. (A Guide for Amalgamation)." – *RM of Nipawin #487 Brief.*

4. Alternative Approaches Recommended

- Several briefs recommend alternative approaches to the 'Directed Consultative Approach' for consolidation.

- Some submissions recommend the creation of municipal-provincial 'facilitator teams' to deal with issues of inter-municipal coordination and amalgamation in various parts of the province.

- Some submissions advocate the creation of regional, inter-municipal 'think tanks' to examine issues relating to inter-municipal coordination and/or amalgamation among municipalities within a particular area.

- Some submissions suggest that municipal and provincial governments should rely on the 'sink or swim' approach. This suggestion indicates that the existence of all municipalities should be contingent on their ability to perform certain core functions within certain financial parameters.

- Many submissions advocate what might best be described as a 'negotiated approach,' coupled with the introduction of 'pilot projects.'

- Indeed, the most notable is the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association's (SUMA) brief, which outlines a process for negotiating pilot projects.

- SUMA's brief proposes negotiations between SUMA, SARM and the provincial government on the following matters relating to the establishment of pilot projects:

  a) The **organizational structure** of multiple demonstration projects in which municipalities would be invited to participate on a voluntary basis, without any pre-set limit on the number of municipalities choosing to participate;
  b) The **roles and responsibilities** of municipalities participating in the demonstration projects;
  c) The **enhancement of status and powers** for municipalities within the demonstration projects;
  d) The **enhancement of resources and financing** arrangements for municipalities within the demonstration projects;
  e) The **legislative and regulatory changes** required to support the demonstration projects;
  f) The **evaluation** of the beneficial outcomes and any problems encountered in the demonstration projects; and
  g) The **setting of goals and timelines** in the voluntary development and implementation of these pilot projects.
  (SUMA, Submission to the Task Force titled "Position of SUMA Board of Directors on Municipal Legislative Renewal").

Quotes on Negotiated & Alternative Approaches

- "It is fundamentally wrong to suggest that any restructuring plan can be imposed before negotiations about municipal powers and resources." – *Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association Brief.*
- "If the government really wants this proposal to work it must be done in consultation with the municipalities...." – *RM of Loreburn #254, Outlook, March 27.*
- "I had looked forward to seeing some bold new initiatives, worthy of 21st Century thinking, with challenges to municipal governments to develop strategic alliances for mutual problem solving, and a handbook of how those directions could be taken." – *Midlakes Community Coalition Intervention, Outlook, March 27.*
- "Alternatives to consolidation are efforts to achieve some goals of consolidation without boundary changes or the creation of a new second tier of governments. This will likely involve some inter-municipal agreements to provide planning or some services on a regional basis to become more effective or to achieve an economy of scale or both." – *RM of Milden #286, Outlook, March 27.*
- "Simply put, our vision is the 'sink or swim' approach based on need and accomplishment...All municipal governments should be mandated to provide access to essential services...no debt is allowed...all municipalities must be responsible for planning and economic development...administration costs must be kept below a specified percentage to total revenues...remove hereditary discriminatory funding practices gradually (e.g. RCMP taxation burden on small towns)...If all of the above were implemented...The strong would become stronger and the weak would either 'sink or swim'. The number of municipalities and economic zones would sort themselves out without any high handed imposed intervention." – *Town of St. Walburg, Maidstone, March 28.*
- "We will need some people with larger local government skills to help show us the way as I don't think that most of our administration has the background to know what to do next. A year would be nice to do the necessary 'bonding;' after that boundaries should be determined and the way left easy to change those boundaries in the future. This will require some commitment from the provincial government so we don't allow this process to be subject to hostage taking from recalcitrant communities." – *Cindy Hoppe, North Battleford, March 28.*
- "The discussion about where the province is heading for the future and whether or not municipal government is required in its present form needs to continue... at the local level." – *RM of Moosimin #121, RM of Martin #122, Windthorst, April10.*
- "We suggest that the enhancement of that which is now in place would contribute more to municipal renewal than any forced rationalizations or amalgamations. What if the map of the proposed regions were made available and the involved municipalities invited to create 'Think Tanks' to explore what life together might look like?" – *Town of Saltcoats, Yorkton, April 10.*
- "What the Government of Saskatchewan should do is set up facilitator teams... consisting of three facilitators – one from SUMA and one from SARM and one from the Provincial Government. These facilitators could look at...ways municipal governments could co-operate...This is the Saskatchewan way to do it." – *Lawrence Viale, Prince Albert, April 11.*
- "The negotiated approach best suits Saskatchewan people and its resources, and the 'optimal' number of municipalities should be at their direction and choice." – *Thelma Wright, Regina, April 12.*
- "Larger is not the answer. Rather, innovative solutions through inter municipal cooperation and voluntary restructuring could solve the current and potential future problems facing rural Saskatchewan." – *RM of Blucher #343, Saskatoon, April 13.*
- "Appoint one or two people with negotiating skills. Persons who would under-stand the thought process and the aspirations of rural people...and have them call together groups of three or four municipal governments, and talk about greater cooperation, in administration and, yes, even amalgamation." – *RM of Rosthern #403, Saskatoon, April 13.*
- "We would suggest the following approach: SARM and SUMA to come together in a united approach to initiate a working conference for advice and support to build a working union of our grassroots sector...invitees to this conference would be: Sask. Chamber of Commerce, REDA's, RDC's, Church Leaders (from all denominations), SSTA, SAHO, Labor Unions, FSIN, Sask. Women's Agriculture Network, Premier Romanow and Caucus, Mr. Hermanson and Caucus and any other organizations that can assist with the development of the 'Vision.'" – *J. Storey, W. Smith, R. Sweet, S. Beacom, A. Cay Brief.*

Quotes on Pilot Projects

- "SUMA is again urging the provincial government to agree that progress toward municipal legislative renewal should be undertaken through voluntary pilot projects demonstrating the benefits of reorganization." – *Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association Brief.*
- "Voluntary pilot projects are a far more reasonable and more palatable approach in the eyes of municipal leaders than the government-imposed amalgamation recommended in the Task Force Report." – *Saskatchewan Party Brief.*
- "Why can some type of pilot project(s) not be established so the effects of the consolidation principle can be studied, changed as needed, or if unsatisfactory, discarded without taking the rest of the province on some kind of lemming run to the sea?" - *Town of Kindersley, Kindersley, March 27.*
- "We would like to see the establishment of a pilot project to prove or disprove the assumptions that are being made…that larger units are more cost-efficient and economically viable." – *RM of Mountain View #318, Kindersley, March 27.*
- "Urban municipalities want to see innovative restructuring models developed and evaluated, perhaps as pilot projects with participation on a voluntary basis." – *Town of Foam Lake, Yorkton, April 10.*
- "Prior to dismantling the current municipal structure only to find out that the proposed new large regional governments don't work, it is imperative that a pilot project be set up and studied to prove if there are significant benefits to be gained and in the event such benefits are proven that the same incentives be kept in place for any future amalgamations which may take place on a voluntary basis." – *Town & RM of Langenburg #81, Yorkton, April 10.*
- "We encourage the Province to develop a pilot project where the results could then be clearly demonstrated to all residents of Saskatchewan." – *Town of Broadview, Windthorst, April 10.*
- "Some of our disappointments: Your lack of consideration to a 'pilot project' to test the viability of structural change." – *RM of Hazelwood #94, Windhtorst, April 10.*
- "We propose meeting the challenge of change in a gradual way— with the introduction of a three to five year pilot project in designated areas, resulting in a complete report on the successes and failures of the projects." –*Town of Star City, Melfort, April 11.*
- "A pilot project of regional municipal government be initiated with the consent of participant municipalities in a specific region of the province and that a thorough evaluation of this governance be conducted over the course of five years so that concrete results can be provided to all parties." – *Town of Porcupine Plain, Melfort, April 11.*
- "We support the sensible approach that the benefits of municipal restructuring should be demonstrated through voluntary pilot projects rather than an imposed master plan." – *RM of Lakeland #521, Prince Albert, April 11.*
- "We need a pilot project that can be used to evaluate both the positive and the negative." – *Village of Montmartre, Regina, April 12.*
- "Why not create a region, fund it properly, organize it around an ideal administrative structure and show us all how such a system might work to our advantage. It's been done before. The Swift Current Health Region was around since the sixties." – *Town of Blaine Lake, Saskatoon, April 13.*
- "We would like to see the results of several pilot projects involving the amalgamation of groups of municipalities." – *RM of Biggar #347, Saskatoon, April 13.*
- "If restructuring is to be done it would prudent to establish a pilot project municipal district area. Such a district could be observed for a period of time and its successes and or problems noted. If such a district demonstrated a high level of success then other municipal governments would be more willing to work towards establishing similar structures." –*Town of Indian Head Brief.*
- "PARCS will support an amalgamation pilot that focuses on resort communities." – *Provincial Association of Resort Communities of Saskatchewan (PARCS) Brief.*
- "We feel that the only way we can achieve a positive climate for amalgamation is to accommodate approximately four pilot projects in the Province… Preferably a pilot in each of the four provincial quadrants (NE, NW, SE, SW)." – *RM of Nipawin #487 Brief.*

XV. VIEWS ON OTHER MATTERS

1. Views & Concerns About Interim Report

- Many submissions express concerns about several specific matters that are either contained in, or missing from, the Interim Report.
- The most often mentioned of these matters include:
  - Fragmentation and diversity are strengths not weakenesses;
  - Inequities and imbalances will always exist;
  - Invalid comparisons with other provinces; and
  - Lack of cost-benefit analysis of restructuring.

Quotes on Concerns of Interim Report

Fragmentation & Diversity Are Strengths, of the Current Municipal System

- "It is our opinion that this province has the right degree of fragmentation and diversity. We believe that where the report condemns diversity, all the same reasons can be used to support diversity." – *RM of Benson #35, Weyburn, March 30.*
- "The attempts to explain the inadequacies seem to explain the strengths of the present system. The diversity, along with the other items that you have listed in a negative way, are often seen as positive by investors, industry and entrepreneurs." – *Martin Olson, Weyburn, March 30.*
- "We believe that some diversity within a municipal system is a good thing. Diversity is what gives the present structures of local government the ability to meet the diverse needs of the local community." – *Response to the Task Force Interim Report (joint submission of 18 municipalities.), Regina, April 12.*

Inequities & Imbalances Will Always Exist

- "We will always have inequities in our society especially in economics, opportunities and services if each individual in this province wants to be 'more equal' than the next person and this is a good thing." – *Dennis Penner, Swift Current, March 29.*
- "Uneven coverage is a fact of life in Saskatchewan, whether we like it or not…Present systems to cover these diversities including protective services, have been developed through much energy and creativity." – *Response to the Task Force Interim Report (joint submission of 18 municipalities), Regina, April 12.*
- "While in theory equal should be the rule the reality is life is not equal…As both an individual and company I have a choice. If I am not satisfied with the government, services, or development that I receive I still have the freedom to choose where I live and work." – *C.M. Vibert, Harvest Services, Regina, April 12.*

Invalid Comparisons With Other Provinces

- "To dwell on the number of governments rather than their efficiency, responsiveness and effectiveness is counter-productive… Such comparisons are not appropriate… perhaps it would be better to compare the amount of area served by RM's rather than the number of people." – *Gerard Hoppe, North Battleford, March 28.*
- "There are very different rural areas, not only throughout Saskatchewan, but throughout Canada. Comparisons with other provinces must be put into perspective." – *RM of Frenchman Butte # 501, Maidstone, March 28.*
- "We have the most roads of any province in Canada…Yet there is no graph comparing the average kilometres of roads serviced by municipalities." – *Curtis McLuhan, Shaunavon, March 29.*
- The comparison to other provinces is not a credible argument for recommending change to Saskatchewan. The reason is simple. Saskatchewan is a unique and diverse province, unlike any other." – *RM of Estevan #5, Weyburn, March 30.*
- "It is an academic and political error to compare the manner of delivering local government services in Saskatchewan to other regions of Canada… We are unique in the services that we require, and the manner in which those services are delivered." – *Petition Opposing Forced Amalgamation.*

Lack of Cost Benefit Analysis

- "The reason I write in opposition to forced amalgamation is because there hasn't been forwarded any legitimate reasons for doing this. It has been proven by two previous amalgamations, e.g., Larger School Units and Larger Health Districts, that bigger is more costly and provides less services." – *RM of Mervin #499, Maidstone, March 28.*
- "No where in the report does it relay the benefits of this amalgamation. It looks only for support of the downsizing concept." –*Town of Maidstone, Maidstone, March 28.*
- "The Task Force needs proof, we want facts backing their recommendations that having fewer but very powerful and highly capable municipal units would benefit the people." – *RM of Round Hill, #467, North Battleford, March 28.*
- "Nowhere in your report did you provide any proof that our community would benefit either economically or socially. Because of our location, there will be no great economic or industry-based development in the foreseeable future." – *RM of Lake Alma #8, Weyburn, March 30.*
- "When contemplating change to the municipal structure in the province, the Task Force does not in any way give specifics to costs of bringing about this change. Before anyone can consider this Report on its merits, concrete evidence on how change would effect our urban and rural communities, financially and socially, would have to be determined." – *Town of Lampman, Weyburn, March 30.*
- "Nowhere in this report do you provide actual and estimated cost comparisons between our current municipal system and the 'larger government. Surely to goodness somebody should have had some idea as to what this new system may cost rural taxpayers. We can only assume that with the absence of this information that it means that there is no real cost savings to our ratepayers and in fact, may cost them more." – *RM of Chester #125, Village of Glenavon, Windthorst, April 10.*
- "We are not opposed to consolidation but we are opposed to the forced 'major' consolidation recommended in the Interim Report which is based on many unproven claims of potential benefits including possible cost savings." –*Village of Windthorst, Windthorst, April 10.*
- "In spite of the fact that countless studies have provided case evidence proving that there are no cost savings in forced consolidation of local governments, in spite of this overwhelming evidence, why is the task force recommending consolidating local governments? Where is the clear evidence to any benefit of the local taxpayer in consolidation?" – *RM of Bjorkdale #426, Melfort, April 11.*
- "It is truly unfortunate that the Task Force report did not concentrate any of their time into showing us the benefits and cost savings that would be reaped form forced amalgamation." –*Village of St. Brieux, Melfort, April 11.*
- "We suggest a mock budget that would reflect the difference between operating existing municipalities versus an amalgamated municipality – preferably several different examples that represent different sized municipalities. Without this information, it is impossible to support the report." - *Town of Watson, Melfort, April 11.*
- "We understand that changes may be necessary. Councils continually need to be looking at ways to provide services in a more efficient way. However, we cannot participate in changes without comparing results achieved by similar results elsewhere." -- *RM of Birch Hills #460, Prince Albert, April 11.*
- "What are the exact efficiencies that you feel will be improved? The Task Force has already stated that it will not be a cost saving factor so what are the benefits?" – *RM of Garden River #490, Prince Albert, April 11.*
- "Prove what the savings are and who is receiving the benefit before amalgamation is forced upon us." – *RM of Longlaketon #219, Regina, April 12.*
- "We note that nowhere has the commission produced models based on real numbers, that show savings resulting from these major, forced amalgamations." –*RM of Rosthern #403, Saskatoon, April 13.*
- "Significant and comparative cost/benefit analysis must be undertaken to determine the potential advantages and/or disadvantages to rationalization." –*Village of Bradwell, Saskatoon, April 13.*
- "No where in your report is there proof that major consolidation will benefit the rate-payers of Saskatchewan. Amalgamations do not minimize costs among municipalities, it will only increase costs." – *RM of Meeting Lake, Saskatoon, April 13.*

2. Views & Concerns About Task Force Process

- Many submissions express concerns about the Task Force process.
- The most frequently mentioned concerns include:
  - Lack of rural representation on the Task Force;
  - Predetermined or hidden agenda on behalf of Task Force and/or Provincial Government; and
  - The Interim Report does not reflect the majority of views from municipal officials and from the Community Forums.

Quotes on Task Force Process

- "It is very obvious that the Provincial Government is on a mission to force change in rural Saskatchewan which is neither needed or wanted. But 'he who pays the piper, calls the tune," and the province has called the tune by having individuals lead the process who believe in the government philosophy on this issue." – *RM of Harris, Outlook, March 27.*
- "We definitely believe there is a hidden agenda." – *RM of Oakdale #320, Kindersley, March 27.*
- "There is much concern and very legitimate concern over the fact that rural representation on the Task Force is limited." – *RM of Eldon #471, Maidstone, March 28.*
- "It has become very obvious that this whole task force exercise is politically driven – driven for the end political gain – and really cares very little about the destruction along the way." – *RM of Senlac #411, Maidstone, March 28.*
- "Our Provincial Government has not mandated a Task Force which would collect the views of Saskatchewan people, it has not mandated a force to determine whether or not Saskatchewan people felt we should, or needed to, undergo municipal renewal. The Task Force has been mandated by our Provincial Government to make recommendations for renewal." – *RM of Bone Creek #108, Shaunavon, March 29.*
- "It seems that the regional task force meeting we attended in Swift Current was just an artificial show of 'good faith' to make us feel as though we were really being consulted when in fact there was already an agenda behind the task force." – *Town of Gull Lake, Swift Current, March 29.*
- "It was apparent early on in this process that the Task Force was given a mandate to come up with a report that favored municipal restructuring by our Provincial Government." – *RM of Willow Bunch #42, Assiniboia, March 30.*
- "Your report claims others reached the same conclusion as your Task Force, that restructuring of municipal government was necessary. The same flawed process took place in each of these past years. Appointed Committees, Task Forces and Study Groups took pleasure in examining the actions of others. The best examination is self examination." – *RM of Mount Pleasant #2, Weyburn, March 30.*
- "Leading questions throughout the consultation process has obviously hurt us…because this interim report does not reflect what I heard." – *Village of St. Brieux, Melfort, April 11.*
- "When in this process did your interpretation of the mandate change from public consultations to review municipal legislation to mandatory major consolidation of municipalities?" – *RM of Bjorkdale, Melfort, April 11.*
- "Please seek out the Young People and ask for their solution…I attended the meeting in Weyburn, and realized after that there were no briefs presented by any person under the age of 30. That I feel is bad news. Please make an advertised request for their opinions to be heard." – *Doug Watson, Brief.*
- "I wish to make it known that I believe the provincial government's Municipal Legislative Renewal is a flawed process, driven by greedy large urban municipalities…." – *G. Giraudier Brief.*
- "Council considers the whole process of the development of the interim report and the hearing process as scheduled to be a slick and manipulative approach to providing the guise of concern and democratic process to obtain and already identified goal." – *Town of Porcupine Plain Brief.*
- "We have concerns that the task force is primarily made up of members from cities and towns and that the RM's are not adequately represented. This means the majority of the task force members do not fully understand how a RM operates." – *RM of Big River #555 Brief.*

3. Views About Economic Development

- Many submissions provide general views regardingeconomic development in Saskatchewan.
- The majority of submissions, though not all, take exception to statements in the Interim Report indicating that municipal renewal is needed to improve and enhance economic development in the province, or that the current municipal system creates obstacles and barriers to economic development in the province.
- Many submissions indicate that it is federal and provincial government policies, not municipal governments, that create barriers to economic development in the province and these policies should be examined and addressed before any renewal of the municipal system is considered.
- Many submissions indicate that their municipalities are members of Regional Economic Development Authorities (REDA's) and support other economic development associations, initiatives and ventures.
- Some submissions also indicate, implicitly or explicitly, that municipalities have little role in or impact on economic development related matters beyond their participation in the above noted activities; other submissions, by contrast, indicate that municipal governance can have a considerable impact and influence on economic development.

Quotes on Economic Development

- "SARM recognizes the need for economic development, particularly in rural Saskatchewan. However, we firmly believe that forced amalgamation will not improve the situation.. Factors such as geographic location, competitive tax climate, and a skilled workforce have had and will continue to exert far more influence on economic developmental success than the structure of the municipal system." – *Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities (SARM) Brief.*
- "My feeling is that a significant structural change to municipal governance would actually be detrimental to economic development in Saskatchewan." – *Kent Dubreil, Outlook, March 27.*
- "Unless major changes are made to provincial government policies, to make the province more attractive to business and entrepreneurship, then all the tinkering in the world will not get economic development moving forward in Saskatchewan." – *West Central REDA, Kindersley, March 27.*
- "The biggest roadblocks to even more economic development in rural Saskatchewan come from the provincial and federal government levels with their half hearted approach to supporting rural economic initiatives." – *RM of Chester #125, Village of Glenavon, Windthorst, April 10.*
- "We maintain that municipal structure and economic growth are unrelated." – *RM of Good Lake, Yorkton, April 10.*
- "Many municipalities in the province belong to and have formed Regional Economic Authorities, Rural Development Corporations and local business associations that promote economic diversity. It has been proven that municipalities can and will work together to foster economic activity." – *RM of Saltcoats #213, Yorkton, April 10.*
- "We are suggesting that the first step is to remove all the impediments at the provincial level. Then, and only then, can we accurately identify impediments to development at the local level." – *RM of Birch Hills #460, Prince Albert, April 11.*
- "Much of the report cites the benefits of economic development. The province currently has a number of Regional Economic Development Authorities who have achieved many successes. It's not clear what a municipal district would achieve that a REDA cannot." – *Town & RM of Shellbrook #493, Prince Albert, April 11.*
- "Economic development within Saskatchewan hinges far more on Provincial Government policies...than it ever will on the policies of local municipalities. Without provincial policies that are conducive to business establishing in Saskatchewan, any policies that local municipalities may have are irrelevant." – *RM of Three Lakes #400, Village of St. Benedict, Village of Middle Lake, Village of Pilger, Melfort, April 11.*

- "Economic growth is dependent upon a health economic climate, including tax structures, and education and skill level of the workforce; not municipal boundaries." – *RM of Sherwood #159, Regina, April 12.*
- "It is our contention that economic development in rural areas occurs where it is most economical and appropriate. Therefore, population of a municipal jurisdiction is irrelevant in economic growth...If amalgamation leads to higher taxes and fewer services then economic growth will be impaired." – *RM of Pense #160, Regina, April 12.*
- "Currently, development is being handled by cooperation of regional economic development authorities, community bond groups, municipalities, provincial and federal bureaucracies. To suggest that municipal districts could do it all on their own and do it more effectively and efficiently is ludicrous." – *Response to the Task Force Interim Report (joint submission of 18 municipalities), Regina, April 12.*
- "Municipal renewal is being held up as a means of encouraging economic development. A lack of attention to property tax issues could well mean that changes to the system of municipal government will actually hinder the industrial growth of this province." – *IPSCO, Regina, April 12.*
- "Our municipal bodies like most other areas of the Province have adapted quite well and have formed Economic Pods to get a whole list of projects completed…The largest problem we have with development is government interference." – *Town of Ogema, RM of Kew West #70, Ogema Economic Development Committee, Regina, April 12.*
- "Saskatchewan's sluggish economic development is the overbearing Provincial income tax that corporations and individuals are being made to pay for being Saskatchewonians." – *RM of Viscount #341, Saskatoon,April 13.*
- "Development happens through positive incentives and an atmosphere for growth…let's not assume that economic development can't happen without forced amalgamation." – *RM of Lost River #313, Saskatoon, April 13.*
- "You state that rural economic development needs to improve. This may be true, but the mechanisms are currently in place in the form of REDA's and the Agriculture Development and Diversification boards." – *RM of Prairie Rose #309, Wynyard, April 14.*
- "The Task Force states that we in rural Saskatchewan discourage economic development because we impose too many challenges or obstacles by the highly fragmented and variegated nature of the municipal system. This is far from the truth. Our major obstacles in rural Saskatchewan are the various government departments and agencies." – *Town of Cupar, Wynyard, April 14.*
- "We have long recognized that the approach of successive Saskatchewan governments has not succeeded in building our province's economy and business community, except in the larger communities and largest cities…rural and smaller urban Saskatchewan must survive and prosper, if any of us are to prosper. And we do not believe that the approach of the last twenty years to developing business and growing the economy will achieve this." – *North Saskatoon Business Association Brief.*
- "When companies make decisions to invest in a particular jurisdiction, they consider: the volume and quality of the resource base; the ease of access to the resource; the fiscal regime of the jurisdiction; and access to markets. Municipal-ities play an integral role in two of these factors: the ability to access the resource and the fiscal regime. We strongly encourage the task force to consider the implications of its recommendations on these factors." – *Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers (CAPP) Brief.*
- "Mayors and reeves don't see economic development as their domain: superior governments should provide the enabling environment for business to develop, the rest is the role of the private sector. This attitude has been a focus of economic development initiatives for a long time, which were obviously unsuccessful." – *Thomas Boysen Brief.*
- "Economic growth is dependent on a competitive tax structure and the ability to attract and retain qualified labour. Changing to new municipal boundaries for the sake of change will not address the many challenges facing small business in Saskatchewan… If changing municipal boundaries more towards less bureaucracy, better, more efficient service delivery, lower taxes and greater accountability, then changes should be considered by the various municipalities…Local governments have little direct influence over the economies in their regions. Economies are instead built by individuals and businesses…." – *Canadian Federation of Independent Business Brief.*

Task Force on Municipal Legislative Renewal

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